

V. Spiritual Life

A. Faith

a. General

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Sermon, *Sermons delivered during the Second Plenary Council of Baltimore...*; Baltimore: Kelly & Piet, 1866, pp 29-37. Also printed in the *Catholic Herald*, October 12, 1878.

See also the next item, which is the same sermon recorded verbatim for the Telegraph. Bishop Rosecrans clearly was given a chance to edit this before it was published in the book.

Faith Cometh from Hearing

Sermon delivered on Monday evening, October 8, 1866, in the Cathedral of Baltimore

In the public mind of our age there is more attachment to belief in Divine Revelation than one who considers only the surface of things would be willing to concede. True, science goes on investigating, and with inventing, and art creating, and all kinds of activity developing itself into startling and gigantic results, as if there were no God, or He were nothing to us. Yet, in despite of all these things, which go to make up the fashion of society, there are multitudes who cannot bring themselves to reject what was received during the ages gone by, that God has spoken to men. There are certain entire sects of our separated brethren, who expressly retain the belief in Divine Revelation, and outside of these there are hundreds and thousands who do but acquiesce outwardly in the prevailing infidelity, but who, inwardly, cannot tear themselves loose from the impression that at some period gone by the voice of God was heard upon the earth. To these, then, who believe that the men of bygone times were not mistaken when they thought they heard the voice of God, first through the mouth of His prophets, and in these last days through His well-beloved Son--I address myself to-night. Supposing that God has spoken to men, He has revealed what they are to believe and what they are to do. But how shall we reach that revelation? For, once reached, all questions are settled. There is no more argument, or doubt, or obscurity. On this point there are three theories; the first, the theory of private judgment without the Bible, or of private inspiration; the second is the theory of private judgment with the Bible; the third is the theory of oral teaching--that of the Catholic Church. To the first, that is, to those who believe man's reason is sufficient of itself alone, belong nearly all the sects of our time. Those who adopted private inspiration began in [the] sixteenth century to eliminate, first one, then another, of the doctrines of Christianity, and since then they have gone on eliminating, until, under the process, Christianity itself has disappeared. Reason, say they, is enough of itself; man was placed here in this visible world with it for a guide, and if he but use it properly it will lead him to all truth.

Now, there is one sense in which this assertion is true. Reason is a sufficient

guide, provided man makes use of all those means which God has bestowed upon him for its enlightenment. God wills all men to be saved; He has provided them with the means of salvation, and if they hear the Church they will be led aright. But it is not at all in this sense that reason is extolled by those who decry Revelation. Man needs no teacher; he can work out his own destiny by his own inborn power. Logically, this theory denies not only Revelation but the existence of God, since God is the only Being that is sufficient for Himself--the only One existing by His own nature--and, in the resources of that nature, supremely happy.

But this theory, absurd in the light of common sense, is refuted by fact. For if the reason of man is sufficient to guide him, why does this not appear from his history? Why has reason not guided him aright in times gone by? The history of the past is not a record of success and of joys, but rather for each child of Adam that came and went across the stage of life, of failure, of disappointment and of blighted hopes. Did not the men of the past love to be happy? If they wished to be happy, and if reason alone could make them happy, how is it that since Eden was closed, the earth has been a valley of tears?

It is refuted, in the second place, by every man's own consciousness. It is true that in the flush of health, when the world goes prosperously, a man can forget his insufficiency and helplessness. Let disaster come upon him, let the hand of God touch him, and as the earthly recedes from him, he will feel his desires remaining with him in all their intensity, and in the loneliness of his heart with which he looks out upon the universe of life, he will be crushed with a sense of his utter helplessness; and then, with instinctive and irresistible yearning, will call upon God. But this demonstrates that reason is not sufficient for itself; for why does the soul seek God, if it does not need Him? If it is sufficient for itself, why seeks it help in another?

The second theory--of private judgment with the Bible--supposes that God did speak in bygone times to one or more of our race, and that to those whose ears His own personal voice did not reach, namely, to men distant in space and time, He made a book the means of communication.

The true origin of this theory is this: The Reformers of the sixteenth century, for reasons not very creditable to themselves, wanted to cast off the authority of the Church. Their best pretext was that the teaching of the Church was contrary to the Scriptures, but they forgot to ask the question of themselves: what right have we to the Holy Scriptures? Where did we get the Bible? and how do we know its truth? Logically, they had no right to receive the Bible and reject the Church, for if the Church could prove the Bible it could not fail to prove itself; for, consider the history of the Church in connection with that of the Bible. The Church existed and taught all Christianity before a line of the New Testament was written; and when it was written, it was not written with the intention of laying down a creed or a code of morals. Both the

Gospels and Epistles presuppose in their readers a knowledge of Christianity. They were not, in fact, collected together into one volume for centuries after the time they were written; and when they were collected together, they had to be distinguished as inspired from many others of similar style and import, solely on the authority of the Church. How absurd, therefore, it is, to receive the Scriptures and reject the Church. Again, our Saviour never intimated any intention of using a book with which to convert the world. We have seen the attempt in the Bible societies in this country and in England. Ship-loads of Bibles have been scattered on heathen shores, but no Christianity sprang up from that seed. But our Lord, when He appointed His Apostles, told them to go forth and preach--to go and talk to the people, stand face to face with them, to hear what they had to say, to make them understand, to correct misconceptions; that is, to use oral teaching.

Moreover, those who maintain that the Bible is the means whereby we must obtain a knowledge of God render salvation impossible to the poor who cannot read, or who cannot obtain, a copy of it, that is to the majority of men. Now, Christ proved His mission by preaching to the poor. Finally, what annihilates the theory of the Bible alone is the fact that those who hold it in their opposition to the Church, have to repudiate it in their defense of themselves. Have not all religious sects some articles of doctrine essential to their organization outside of the Bible? One has the Thirty-Nine Articles; another the Westminster Confession; another the teachings of John Wesley, and if any man of these sects refuses to subscribe to these Articles, he is tried and excommunicated. But, says he, I believe in the Bible. You do not believe our interpretation of it, they answer, and so anathema. In practice, they claim the authority which they deny to the Church, and, what ought to be galling to their adherents, exercise authority without pretending to infallibility. But a theory, which its own defenders cannot follow, must be not only impracticable but absurd.

The third theory is that of oral teaching. This I am about to explain, not defend. According to it every one must learn Christianity from the lips of the priest. So the Catholic Church understands the command of Christ, "Go and preach;" and the same command she understands as given, not to the Apostles merely, but to their successors in office, to the end of time. When He walked the earth, the Redeemer spoke to men through His lips of flesh. Could not He who formed them use the organs of another? He can make the heavens tell His glory and the firmament show forth the works of His hands, and, when He wishes, can use even humbler instruments to reach through the ear the minds He has created; He speaks to men through the priesthood. The process of learning is very simple, and the same for all. No matter what be a man's age, dignity, intellectual acquirements, he must become as a little child, in the strict sense of the word. He must sit on the bench with the little boys and girls at catechism; must say the creed and believe it; must repeat, without questioning, the explanations of the

commandments and the sacraments. If told that the Body and Blood of Christ are really present in the Sacrament, he must believe that that Body and Blood of Christ are really in the Sacraments. If told that the priest has the power to forgive sins, he must believe that the priest has the power to forgive sins, and his reason for believing is the same as the child's, because the Church teaches it.

"The Church teaches it," is the believer's answer to every why. But then it may be said, if we believe the Church's teaching, there is an end to all independence of thought. If the Church could teach anything but truth, this objection might have weight. But she can teach only Divine Revelation, therefore, only to enlighten. But the teacher who enlightens, by removing doubt, does not take away independence. If I tell you things of the mountains, forests, rivers and cities of the great West, I do not hurt your independence, though I command your belief.

In any study, the child that asks questions and receives answers learns to think instead of giving up the power of thought. To be instructed of God is the highest dignity to which human nature can aspire.

But if the child taught by the Catholic Church must believe, then those taught by other Churches must believe, and so must live and die in the faith of their teachers. Not so; for the principle of belief on authority, as dictated by common sense, is that we must receive what is taught until we have reasons for rejecting it. But those born in false religions will always find reasons for doubting what they have been taught, whereas, those taught by the Catholic Church, which is the mouth-piece of the all true Son of God, will never be chilled by the shadow of a rational doubt from the cradle to the grave.

Of the three theories of the manner in which Revelation can be reached by the human mind, the first two are, from the explanation I have given of them, manifestly absurd and impracticable. The third, therefore, must necessarily be received; that is, Revelation must reach the human mind through the hierarchy, divinely appointed to teach and divinely guaranteed against error. So the path of truth is equally open to all, and so plain that the wayfarer, though a fool, may not, without his own fault, err therein.

What, indeed, is more natural than this? All other knowledge comes to the mind through oral teaching. Language itself is taught to the child by the parent; how but by oral teaching does the apprentice learn his trade, the young man business, the ways of commerce; the professional man, what belongs to his calling?

Since, therefore, all other matters of importance are learned by oral teaching, is it not most natural that Christ should choose to teach his revelation by the same method? This doctrine of oral teaching, rightly considered, commends itself not only to our minds, but to our hearts. The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us. He did not merely make one great effort, and die for us, and then leave us, but He condescended to

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make our ways His ways, our thoughts His thoughts, even our weaknesses His own, and so He is in the Church, not merely on great occasions, when mighty revolutions threaten its very existence, but whenever a soul in darkness asks for light, in temptation for strength, in doubt for guidance, in sorrow for consolation. Not only will He prevent the Church from being crushed, but He will so overrule the passions of men, so shape the vicissitudes of empires as to make them all contribute to the glory of His immaculate spouse, and of those sheltered in her sanctuary. Now, the times look dark indeed; the spoiler seems to be near the sanctuary; the capital of the Christian world has none to defend it against those who avow their enmity to God and religion. But He who sitteth in the Heavens shall laugh them to scorn. In His good time the tempest shall cease, the clouds vanish, and the sunshine of triumph gild once more her altars as of old.

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Sermon, *The Catholic Telegraph*, October 24, 1866

Faith Cometh from Hearing.

Sermon delivered on Monday evening, October 8, 1866, in the Cathedral of Baltimore, at the Second Plenary Council of Baltimore.

Most Reverend Delegate of the Holy See, venerable fathers, and beloved brethren: There is more attached to belief in divine revelation than one who considers only the surface would be willing to concede. True science goes on distributing and inventing new systems, and enterprise creating, and all kinds of activity developing itself and startling and surprising us as if there were no God, or if that God were nothing to us; and yet, despite all that makes up the fashions of society, we must believe in what, during ages gone by, was looked upon as what God had spoken to men. There are certain sects of our separated brethren who openly reject the belief in the fact of divine revelation, and there are hundreds and thousands who do but acquiesce in this belief in order to prevent infidelity, but do not intend to believe or practice its teachings. To those who clung to the belief that the men of by-gone times were not mistaken when they thought they heard the voice of God through the mouth of His beloved Son--to those I address myself to-night.

Supposing God has spoken to men, He has told us what is necessary to our salvation, He revealed to us what we must believe and practice. How then shall we reach this revelation? If once reached, all questions are settled, there is no more argument, no more doubt or obscurity. But how is this to be reached? On this point there are three theories; the *first* is the theory of private judgment without the Bible; the *second*, of private judgment with the Bible; and the *third*, the theory of oral teaching, which is the one to which the Catholic Church adheres. To the first, that is to those who

believe that man's reason is sufficient of itself, belong nearly all the sects of our time. From the sixteenth century they began by eliminating, first one or two doctrines, and have gone on eliminating, not one or two, but all the doctrines of Christianity, for, in not admitting the author of Christianity, Jesus Christ, they do not admit any. Reason, say they, is enough; man was placed in the world gifted with reason, and, if used properly it will lead him to all truth. Now, in regard to this theory of human reason, there is one sense in which it is true; it is true if man makes use of those means which God has bestowed upon us afterward. Originally God wills all men to be saved, and He must therefore have provided the means--the presumption, therefore, is that He established the Church to be that means--then reason is sufficient. But it is not at all in this sense that it is taken by those who say that human reason is enough, independent of authorized teaching. Man, they say, is able to work out his own destiny by his own power. This theory in effect denies the existence of God, because God is the only being that is sufficient of Himself, the only one existing by the power of His own divine nature. In the second place, this theory is refuted by fact; for, if the reason of man be sufficient of itself, why is this not evident from history? What is the cause of the cry of his race, of the wail of sorrow, of disappointment, of blighted hope, why has reason failed to avert all these? It is refuted, too, by every man's own conscience; it is very true that in the flush of health, and when the world goes prosperously, he can forget his insufficiency and helplessness--not for long, however; let but the hand of God touch him, and then, in the humiliation of his utter powerlessness, he will feel the loneliness of his own soul. Nothing that the world has can satisfy the soul--it must live on forever and ever with God. No one can feel the hand of misfortune upon him, without reaching out the hands of his soul to cling to the wires along which God communicates His blessing. Besides, why seek faith, why seek guidance from God, if we want nothing besides ourselves? If we are sufficient in ourselves, we have no need of seeking help beyond ourselves. The answer is, because human reason is insufficient, natural reason, however valuable, is not enough in order that we may know how to be saved.

The second theory of the sufficiency of human nature with the Bible supposes that God did speak in by-gone times to one or more of our race, and that for generations afterwards the Apostles and their successors wanted a book as the means to reach their hearers, because from any other point of view this theory is full of manifest absurdities. The reformers wanted to cast off the authority of the Church, and their pretext was that the authority of the Church was contrary to scripture. But it was forgotten to ask themselves the question: "What right have we to cite scripture? Where did we get the scripture? And how do we know the truth of the scripture?" It was impossible except on the authority of the Church. Take the history of the Church as connected with the Bible. Not one of the Apostles went forth to preach with the intention of drawing up a code of morals, for their mission pre-supposed a knowledge of truth in order to teach

Christianity. It was not until centuries after that the sacred writings were collected together and made into one book--made by selection from a great number of books--made on the authority of the Church. No one has a right, therefore, to receive the Bible and reject the Church--if he receives on the authority of the Church he must receive all; if it was good to establish one doctrine there was the same authority to establish all, and, therefore, he must receive all. Besides, consider how absurd is the idea of converting the world by a book. We have seen the attempt in the bible societies; the scriptures have been scattered through heathen lands at vast expense, but no Christianity sprung up in consequence. When Christ appeared to His Apostles, He told them to go forth and preach, to talk, to instruct--the people were to listen patiently and to understand from the preaching of the Apostles, from oral teaching. Moreover, those who maintain that the Bible is the means to obtain all the knowledge of God sufficient for salvation forget history. If religion could be learned only from a written book, then there were ages when religion could not be learned at all; for centuries no copy of the Bible could have been obtained, as none existed.

The veneration of the Church of God for the Bible is sufficiently ardent; she took care of it--kept it for ages when all the vestiges of civilization perished. She venerates it as the word of God intended for the edification of the faithful, who know through her guidance what truths they will find in it. Consider the inconsistency of those who say that the Church endeavors to prevent her children gaining a knowledge of the Bible. Why all sects have some 39 articles or other.--If the Bible is the rule of faith what is the use of 39 articles--articles of faith, and Westminster confessions must be enforced or their existence, as a declaration of belief, is simply absurd. And, if enforced there is at once dissent; those who deny any of them are forthwith brought to order, and then there is excommunication of laymen, who believe they have a right to find whatever they choose in the Bible. They say "I believe in the Bible, why censure me because I believe differently from you?" We find the doctrine of the Holy Eucharist, they find it not--what is the reason of the difference, if the Bible is sufficient to teach all truth necessary for salvation? In like manner, with regard to all the other special doctrines of the Catholic Church. If men claim the right to read and judge for themselves, and can not follow their own theory, the natural inference is that that theory is absurd, and this is precisely the inference to which the theory of the sufficiency of human reason with the Bible leads--such theory is utterly impracticable.

The third theory is that of oral teaching. I have no intention demonstrating this theory [but to go] only so far as to explain that the Catholic Church teaches that every one must come and learn from the lips of the priest--and priesthood. So the Church understands the command of Christ, "Go and preach," and the same meaning attaches to that command until the end of the world, viz: to teach by a living priesthood. When He walked the earth, the Redeemer spoke to men through the organs of the human

body. If He wished to use any other means was He not free? Could he not have made the stones of the earth preach to men? And did He not know how to make men understand through the ear? The process is simple and is the one appointed by Christ. No matter what our age, dignity, position or intellectual acquirements, we must become like little children in the strict sense of the word. We must sit on the bench among the little boys and girls, we must say the Creed--the twelve articles of the Creed--if told that the priest has power to forgive sins we must believe it. If we know ever so much, the reason for our belief is the same as for that of the smallest child. To the child the question is asked "Why do you believe in the Catholic Church?" and he answers "Because the divine Bishop has appointed it to teach all truth." The reason is the same for all; the way is so plain that the child can be as certain as the most learned man, who, if left to his own reason alone, will only remain diffident, and distrustful, seeking in vain to find satisfaction for longing after truth, and false sophisms.

But then it may be said "If we believe the priest, there is an end to independence of thought." If the priest could tell anything and you were bound to believe it the remark would be just. But he can teach only divine revelation; he can not teach anything that is not true, because he teaches not as an individual priest, but as representing apostolic authority. If I who have come here from the western country tell you of certain things that have occurred there, you inquire and finding out they are true, believe. In any study the child who asks a question receives an answer. Does it loose its independence of thought? To be instructed is the highest dignity that human nature can hope for. If one child is bound to believe, other children are bound to believe for the same reason; and so, if the Church has been appointed to teach, the principle of common sense requires that we believe what is taught until we find a reason for disbelieving. We see this exemplified in actual life, in all human institutions this principle of truth manifests itself. With those brought up in false religions there is always reason to doubt. To protest against, there must be a reason, but, as the Catholic Church is the organ of communication of Jesus Christ with this [His?] people, she condemns or anathematizes doubt. The simple explanation then is that the first and second of the theories proposed must be rejected; the third is the one proposed by the Catholic Church. The hierarchy, as the appointed teachers of mankind can not err--Christ guarantees that. This mode of communicating with men commends itself to our common sense, for it is natural to expect that God would adopt the same manner in teaching His truths to that in which we learn other truths. And how do we learn them? How does the child learn names? How does the apprentice, the professor, the man of the world, acquire knowledge? By oral teaching. Go to the doctor and ask him did he learn his knowledge from books, from reading lectures, he will answer no. He obtained his knowledge by getting explanations from other doctors. If every other knowledge must be imparted by oral teaching, so must religion by the same means. Different

religions can not be taught at different times to deceive men, because Christ is the guardian of His Church and has promised to be constantly with her. This is the statement of the doctors of the Catholic Church, and commends itself to common sense. It appeals also to our hearts. We must practice strict obedience to the Church--to all she teaches, and have implicit faith in her unerring wisdom. Many times trials are allowed to come on the Church and you might be tempted to think that is because the Church is imperfect. Not so, however; those afflictions happen by the will of her Divine founder, and are for the benefit of His spouse, His holy Church. If he chooses that the Holy Father be driven from his home, from the sanctuary of the Christian world it is for the best and we must rely on His divine wisdom.

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Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, Dec. 11, 1875 (3)

[No Inherited Faith]

We see now and then a man who talks about hereditary faith, and about men's heirship in the Catholic Church coming to him with his grandfather's knee buckles and his father's old overcoat. Whoever speaks in that way has his catechism to understand yet. Faith is a supernatural gift. Every one, no matter who his parents are, is born without any right to salvation. He must be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, and the fact of any one looking upon his faith as his birthright, only illustrates the unlimited power of human self-conceit, which can reach such a point as to imagine the universe to have been made and arranged in reference to family. The man whose ancestors "did not go with Noe into the ark, because his family always kept a boat of their own," was modest and intelligent, in comparison with him who rates his Catholic faith among his family chattels.

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Lecture, *The Catholic Columbian*, March 6, 1875

This lecture was given at St. Joseph Cathedral in Columbus at vespers on Sunday, February 28, 1875. The Catholic Columbian under the headline of "Instruction in St. Joseph's Cathedral" published on February 6 names Rosecrans as the speaker.

[The Grounds of the Catholic Faith]

No accusation that prejudiced people make against Catholics is more unjust than the not uncommon one, of accepting their faith blindly, or without weighing the grounds of it with care.

I admit, of course, that Catholics are not all highly educated in the sciences and

literature, but deny that Catholics as a body are ill-instructed in the matter of religion. And still more earnestly do I deny that where they happen to be ignorant they are so by the desire of the Church, or by the contrivance of the clergy. Nothing is so near the heart of the Church, so earnestly enjoined by decrees of councils, bulls of popes, pastorals of bishops, and exhortations from pastors, and in writings of devout Catholics, as instruction in religion. Those who denounce us as fostering ignorance are the very persons who deny us the right to have religion taught in the schools we help to support, and compel us to provide private schools, where those who know they have souls need not fear to acknowledge it, and where the study of how to save them is not considered disgraceful or superstitious. The desire of promoting religious instruction founded all the great universities of Europe from Oxford to Seville and Bologna, and the chief destruction of property made by the Reformation in Ireland fell upon institutions devoted to religious instruction. In our own day the enemies of religion from Bismarck to Garibaldi, from Italy to Mexico and South America, direct their chief fury against religious instructors. The Sisters of Charity, the Brothers of the Christian Schools, the Jesuits, the Redemptorists, are the ones dangerous to the state under the new order.

Even here amongst ourselves, you know something of the opposition we encounter in insisting on the religious instruction of children, and in forbidding them to spend their school time in schools where God is never heard of, and their religion is ignored and despised. You know that there are persons who set authority at defiance as thoroughly as ever Luther or Henry VIII. did, that stay away from the Sacraments even during the Easter time, and deliberately choose to arch after the banner of Lucifer rather than yield certain notions of pride and worldly calculation.

I mention these things now not to characterize them as they deserve, but to show that it is not the Church that fears religious instruction, but the enemies of the Church; not those who frequent the Sacraments that shun inquiry, but those who remain away from them; not Catholics who fear that investigation may undermine their faith, but non-Catholics who fear that investigation will convict them of error.

I invite you now to an investigation of the grounds of our Faith in every quarter in which it is, or can be, assailed. Catholic faith has been called the bridge connecting the Finite with the Infinite, the soul with its Creator. Let us see on what foundations the bridge rests. The subject will need careful attention, but it will not be unprofitable and to the thoughtful mind not uninteresting.

[1.] The first truth on which Catholic Faith rests is the existence of God. The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God, long ago, and since the wise man's time many other fools have followed his example.

Fool as he was, it was in his heart he said there is no God--in his heart that shrank from the scrutiny of God's pure eyes, and hated the yoke of his discipline in its

unbridled passions; but not in his intellect. For the intellect could not help but see that God exists. I do not mean that the natural intellect can see God in all the fullness in which revelation shows Him to Christians, but it cannot help but see Him as the maker of all that is made, He Himself owing existence to no one, but existing of necessity and for all eternity.

Here is the argument which no understanding can help being brought face to face with.

Things exist that might have not existed.

But they could not exist without some one to give them existence.

Therefore a creator exists.

But this creator could not have been himself created.

Therefore He exists of His own nature. Therefore He is eternal and His attributes are infinite. He is good without mixture of evil, wise without drawback of ignorance, or deception; just without possibility of injustice or wrong, strong without limit to what He can do.

Nor is the force of this argument broken in the least by imagining a great number of changes to have taken place in what we see since its first creation. Suppose this earth was once vapor, and became sea and land by the operation of motion and heat, and suppose that life was developed and destroyed during successive ages--that sponges became fishes, fish serpents, serpents birds and beasts, and beasts arose, from lower to higher, until man was the result--what then? The mists in which development began, and the motion and the heat had to be created and kept in action, and the argument still remains, what did not exist does now exist. Therefore the Almighty Being exists who created it. A weak understanding may be bewildered by so long a chain of so-called cause and effect. But it is only the darkness of a corrupt heart that prevents its seeing that the first link of the chain with all its powers of development must have been the direct product of the Almighty's *fiat*.

[2.] God is a real personal being having a care of all He has made.

Justice, power, goodness, truth, wisdom are abstract ideas. They can exist as qualities only in One who is just, powerful, good, true and wise. But His ONE is by the very fact of existing a person--one who has His own understanding of things, His own will concerning them, Who is the responsible author of His own actions.

God is no creation of our fancy. Men may corrupt the idea of the infinite being, they may fancy Him divided, full of caprices and grossness, but this does not change the reality. The gods of the Gentiles are demons; but the Lord made the heavens.

He is alone in His vastness, His self-existence, His supreme and absolute mastery over all that He has made. From all eternity He is the central, immutable, unchangeable being in the universe, happy in Himself before space was strewn with stars, or suns were made to shine, or planets to revolve. He is happy in Himself still. All that was

made He made; not only all forms of mater and spirit, but all their capabilities and combinations just as we witness them. In the motion of the stars, in the succession of birth, growth and decay, He not only planted the seed, but He caused the birth, the growth and decay. Therefore, He has a care for all that He has made, not in the material world merely, not only in the succession of seasons, the growth of bodies, and the revolutions of planets, but in the world of spirits also. To the sprits indeed He gave free will, but He could not give them self-existence. These must live and move and have their being in Him, even while they outrage Him. But His infinite justice binds Him to take note of all their free actions, and to mete out retribution to them--reward to meritorious deeds, and shame to iniquity. Even the most degraded of the Gentiles know, says St. Paul, that God is, and is the rewarder of those who seek Him.

3. The third ground of our Faith may be stated in this paragraph:

God can make a revelation to man, if He desires.

This is evident. God knows truths which man does not know. Man has an understanding capable of being taught. Therefore God can teach him.

Certainly He who made men capable of revealing their thoughts to one another is not without the power of revealing His thoughts to man.

4. The fourth ground of Faith is thus expressed:

God did desire to make a revelation to man, and did make it.

There is now in the world a system of doctrine claiming to be a revelation of God. It has been in the world since the time of Moses, and even then it appealed to tradition and historical facts in support of its claim to an antiquity reaching back to the Garden of Eden. Its claim to credit from the beginning and now is that it was revealed and commanded by [the] Almighty; and this claim is to be settled only and solely by history. We do not know beforehand what God ought to have revealed, or what He as likely to reveal. The only question is, "did He reveal Judaism? Did He reveal Christianity?"

We Catholics say without reserve, He did reveal them both, and we have no fear to be questioned as closely as any doubter may desire about the reasons for our belief. In this we are in a far different position from that of non-Catholics. When pressed for a reason why they accept Christianity, they answer the Bible. But when pressed for the reason why they believe the Bible to be God's word, they are unable to respond.

We have no fear of being pressed into silence on the subject.

We believe the Bible, in the first place, to be authentic and veritable history for reasons similar to those on which we believe Livy's History, Sallust's Cataline, or Cæsar's Gallic War, and taking it as such, we finish our demonstration of the fact of Divine Revelation before stirring the question of the Bible's inspiration. At the very least it is the testimony of truthful men, and taking this testimony as true we prove that Christianity is a message from God, and for the rest, we turn and ask Christianity to

teach us all that God wants us to know.

Historical facts, then, furnish us the ground for this argument. Christianity is a revelation from God if it comes to us warranted as such by works which no one but God could do. But it does come to us warranted as a message from Him by works which none but God could do. Therefore it is a revelation from God.

These works are what we call miracles. Now I am not going into any nice discussion about the nature of miracles, which would consume much time. Leaving out what is said by the learned, about laws of nature, possibilities of created causes--diabolic and angelic--the self-deluding capabilities of human nature, I will say this as the ground of the argument: There are some events which are so manifestly unwonted, so startling and so great, as to lead every right minded witness of them, irresistibly, to the conclusion that Almighty God is then and there their author, and does them in order to call our attention to what He wants to say to us.

Three kinds of miracles attest to the divinity of Christianity.

1. Prophecies fulfilled.
2. Works manifestly from God wrought in the bodies of men.
3. The propagation of the Christian Church, and its triumph over the mind and heart of the world.

The fulfillment of prophecies is a miracle, because they show a fore knowledge of events, which only God can possess.

These events are not in the physical order; not like the cycles of changes in the moon, or transit of Venus, or revolutions of comets; that is, they are not in the routine of things that must happen when their time comes, but they are of what men, of their own free will, will choose to do, when they might choose the contrary.

Now the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ were declared centuries before they happened. The astounding malice and blindness of the Jews in rejecting Him; their ingenious hate in inventing torments for Him who had never ceased to do them good, were minutely portrayed as being to be visited upon Him who was to be sent of God--the Virgin's Son, the expectation of the Gentiles, the restorer of all things, the prince of peace.

Now, who could know these things, and inspire the prophets to describe them, but He Who knows all things? If, therefore, we believe in Jesus Christ as God's messenger, and that He is true in all He teaches, what do we do but give faith to God?

Second, the Miracles of Jesus Christ are matters of public history. His three years of active life were full of them. Raising the dead, giving sight to the blind, making the lame walk, driving out diseases by word of command, were as familiar to Him as day and night. The test miracle was His resurrection from the dead. This He agreed to do as a sign from God that He had a right to exact homage and adoration of the human will and intellect. The Jews challenged Him to it, and He accepted the challenge. The

Jews had all the machinery of society with which to defeat Him; they had the civil and military and ecclesiastical power and the prejudices of the multitude, while He was alone. They used all their means energetically, cunningly, ruthlessly. They bore down His good name by calumny; disfigured His comeliness by stripes and bruises. They took the last drop of His blood. They placed a stone at the mouth of His tomb, and set a guard to watch it.

On the "Third Day He rose, as He said." Who but God could have done this? But it was done on a challenge to settle the question, Was Jesus Christ the messenger of God or not? The Almighty God, therefore, is our surety for believing all that Jesus Christ teaches.

Third, the propagation of the Church is a miracle. The fact cannot be denied. The world became Catholic. The mightiest change that history records was wrought in universal society. The gospel, without any human aid, overcame all the power and influence that society can wield. The Gospel, with the mysteries in its teaching and its authority in demanding belief so revolting to intellectual pride; its moral doctrines of self-denial, and the cross, so hateful to the natural inclinations of men, with despised Jews for its preachers, who were poor, illiterate and unrefined, overthrew the philosophy, poetry, art, mythology, social life, political astuteness, judicial and military power of the vast empire that then held under its sway the whole known world.

If such a thing could be done without miracle, no more stupendous miracle could be conceived. God did it beyond all shadows of doubt. And what He did was for the propagation, through the whole world, of the Catholic Church. The Apostles did not preach vague theories or subtle speculations, but JESUS CHRIST CRUCIFIED AND RISEN. That is, they preached His miracles as establishing His authority, and after exacting from their converts an act of faith in Him, baptized them and then had them instructed at leisure in the doctrines He teaches and the practices He enjoins. "Going, teach all nations," He said; "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." He did not say what they should believe. That was not the main question. But the fundamental point was belief in Him and His authority. After they believed in the messenger would be the time to teach the message.

This is the attitude in which the Catholic Church stands before the world today. She does not fear, but she does not care to discuss particular doctrines with those outside. What she wants is to have her divine mission recognized, and she fears no investigation into her claims as the messenger of God. What she deprecates is slander, prejudice, ignorance, refusal to investigate. What she deprecates is the fear of being convinced which keeps so many non-Catholics from studying her claims. What she deprecates is the blind rejection of her teachings, on the illogical plea that some Catholics do not live exemplary lives.

From beginning to end her plea for the divine mission is without flaw or

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imperfection. The chain that binds her to her position as teacher of mankind is without a wanting or a faulty link. Here it is; gainsay it who can. There is a God, creator, lord, master, judge of all mankind. He has revealed His will to men establishing the authenticity of His message by miracles that were undeniable. He established the Catholic Church as the means by which He would communicate His teaching and commands to all generations. The Catholic Church teaches us--and we thank God for His marvelous light--whereby our understanding is freed from error and ignorance, and our will placed above the control of concupiscence and passion. All doctrines but those of the Catholic Church are condemned by the fact that they are not accepted for her teaching. They are not revelations, but speculations. They are not taken on the Master's word, but concocted by private judgments. They are not links in the chain binding us to heaven, but broken fragments of the golden band, which caprice has carried off into the mire of human helplessness. They are Christian faith without Christ; a selection of His teachings, taken in contempt of the teacher; man-made religion, as powerless to save as man. We count it no humiliation to be taught of God. We surrender our intellect to the all-knowing, our will to the all-just One, without shadow of fear the He will invade and swallow up our liberty. We beg Him to swallow up in His infinite mercy all liberty we have of rebelling against Him, and in doing so we feel certain of preserving our liberty, ennobling our reason and accomplishing our whole destiny.

160.

The Divinity of Christ, Part II, Chapter 1

All that Jesus Christ Taught is True

God is truth itself. If He could fail to be true He would cease to be Himself. Jesus Christ, therefore, being God can speak nothing but truth.

For many years past it has been customary to speak of "religious opinions;" and the effort to unite the wrangling and numberless sects of Protestants has somewhat recently brought forth the absurd distinction between "the essentials" and "non-essentials of Christian doctrine."

Now, of right, there can be no such thing as "religious opinions" among Christians; for, "opinion" is a judgment that something is probable, but admits the possible truth of its contradictory. It can not exist where there is certainty. It is not my "opinion" that what I see close by me is white, or black, or red: I know its color by sight. Knowledge excludes opinion. But when God teaches we know His teaching is true: that is, the religion revealed by Jesus Christ is certain; therefore there is no room for opinion in religion. Either Jesus Christ taught it or He did not. If not, it is no religious matter, and any opinion concerning it is not a religious opinion; if He did, it must be true, and

the opposite necessarily false.

Faith is not opinion, it is the assent of the understanding to the teaching of God; and whoever doubts in a matter of faith doubts the veracity of God. But to call one's faith "opinion" is to admit that it may be false; therefore, of right, there can be no such thing as religious opinions among Christians.

It is true that modern society extols toleration of religious opinions, even if it does not always practice it; and that good men and sound theologians of the Catholic Church, nay, even the Church authorities, have acquiesced in both the practice and the theory.

Catholics and Protestants and infidels have learned to live in the same community without persecuting each other for opinion's sake. This is well. But one may concede and advocate toleration, without believing that all religions are equal before God. Toleration is proper, not because it is as safe and as sensible to doubt Jesus Christ as to believe in Him; but because it is not for human tribunals to judge and punish the sin of doubting. When I say to my neighbor, "Believe as you please," I do not mean "You can not believe a lie," but only "If you do believe a lie it is your own affair."

The Italian Revolutionists have been trying, for a long time, to extort, from the Vicar of Christ, an admission that heresy is no sin: and he has, again and again, been compelled to condemn their error, under the name of toleration. His meaning never was--as some misbelievers wickedly distort it--that it is wrong to leave heretics unflayed; but only, that in rejecting the teaching of Christ, men, whether rulers or subjects, commit sin. But it is one thing to say that a man does wrong, and another to say that any other man has a right to punish him for it. Thoughts of lust and avarice and ambition are wrong; but no human tribunal has the ability or the right to judge and punish them. In like manner, thoughts and words of unbelief are wrong; but God only is their judge and avenger. No man can, without sin, reject the teaching of Christ. "He that believeth not shall be condemned;" but the Sovereign Judge must condemn him.

The sin of unbelief does not consist in rejecting all the doctrines of Christianity, but in rejecting any one of them. It consists not in saying, "I do not believe this dogma or that dogma;" but in saying, "I will not believe in Christ." In this matter, what is said of the law is emphatically true: he that offendeth in one is guilty of all. If you reject any part of Christ's teaching you thereby reject His authority, and retain what part you retain, not on His account, but on your own. Hence, those who make selections from the dogmas of Christianity can not properly be called Christians. Therefore, the distinction between the essentials and non-essentials of Christianity is absurd. The great act that makes one a Christian is submission to Christ and worship of Him; but whoever believes some of Christ's doctrines, and rejects others, assumes not to be a worshiper, but a patron. If a doctrine was taught by Christ it can not but be "essential." If it was not taught by Him it is not Christianity.

It is very proper to distinguish between what is Christianity and what is not. But, in Christianity there is no such thing as essential and non essential.

Something illustrating this view occurred during the lifetime of the Redeemer, and is recorded in the sixth chapter of the Gospel according to St. John. When He had said, again and again, that to eat His flesh was necessary to salvation, many, who had been with Him up to that point, unable to believe the doctrine of the Eucharist, "went back and walked no more with Him." They understood the practical matter correctly. They were no longer to stand among His Disciples, when they would not receive all His teaching. Then He turned to the twelve, and said "Will ye also go away?" And Simon Peter answering, said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life;" as if he had said, "Lord, we understand not how Thy words are to be fulfilled; but we know Thou hast said them. We comprehend not Thy teaching; but we adore the teacher. Thou hast the words of eternal life. We believe all Thou sayst, awaiting thine own good time to understand it."

This is so plain a matter that it is a marvel how the enlightened men of our age and country came to overlook it. All that Jesus Christ taught is true; therefore, whoever does not receive all of Christ's teachings is no Christian; "therefore, whoever tries to measure Christian doctrine by his reason, beyond employing his reason on the question of fact--did Christ teach it or not?--by that very fact rejects the authority of Christ, and is no Christian. People have a right to call themselves rationalists if they choose; but they have no right to call themselves Christians at the same time. A rationalist is one who rejects all teaching, and makes his reason the judge of all teachers. A Christian, on the other hand, is one who submits to the teaching of Christ. One can not be both at the same time.

According to this test, which of the multitudinous sects that disfigure modern civilization has the right to be called Christian?

Certainly none of those who are avowedly rationalistic. The sects of Germany and France, which, while making Jesus Christ an impostor, still speak of Him with insulting affectation of sentimental respect; the sensationists of England, New and Old, who, tired out with denying His divinity, the atonement, and the endless punishment of sin, have turned their attention to the novelties that used to belong to gossips and politicians; the thousand and one sects which insist upon only one doctrine--a change in the sensibilities--as if Jesus Christ had taught no other: these are all among those who have turned back and walk no more with Jesus; and it would be logic in them, and a blessing to the million who think Christianity to be the unreasonable jumble they make it to be, if they would throw off the mask and call themselves Christians no more. They may be learned men, shrewd men, rich men, influential politicians, numerous voters; but they are not disciples of Christ, because they do not accept all that He teaches, and therefore do not accept Him.

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This country numbers, now, far more unbelievers than believers; and the revolt of the intellect has been, not against Christianity, but against the travesties of Christianity that have gained vogue among those who rejected the teaching of the Church since the unhappy period of the "Reformation." One brought up in anti-Catholic prejudice, taught to hold as unquestionable that Protestantism is Christianity, can hardly be blamed for becoming infidel. If the cold formalism, and worldly pride, and contradictory doctrines of Episcopalianism, or the dark tenets of Calvinism, or the unreasoning sensualism of Methodism, were all Christianity, what inducement would there be to be a Christian? What wonder is it that all through the United States the churches are vacant; and the lecture-rooms, concert-halls, and theaters are full? The infidelity of America has nothing in it of the guilt which belongs to infidelity in lands where the true Religion is taught. It is not the outgrowth of perversity so much as the revolt of reason against the inconsistency of false teaching; and the Redeemer of souls, looking around upon the spiritual ruin of so many in this land; has a right to say, "With these I have been wounded, in the house of those who (ought to have) loved me."

161.

Sermon, Book 2, No. 13

Faith and Authority

(a four-page fragment; its title is given on the contents page of Book 2)

Mary and Joseph were wondering over things that were said concerning Him.

Mary was not only the holiest but in all things worth knowing the wisest of all God's creatures; and Joseph as the companion of her daily life was the sharer of her knowledge also. Yet the Gospel says of that they were wondering. Wonder is a confession both of ignorance and of inability to comprehend. There are things, therefore, in the universe, which the wisest do not comprehend. The Church, my brethren, does not condemn or undervalue science of any kind; but She does condemn, and common sense condemns, the insolent spirit assumed and fostered by some men who call themselves men of science: that is to say, two and two made four yesterday, and two and two will. She has no objections to progress in discoveries and inventions; but she does object to the discoverer or the inventor's taking for granted that because science is true faith must be false.

Not long ago a public teacher was reported in newspapers as saying that "Some millions of our population were educated up to the Catholic religion and many more millions were educated beyond it." Which is to say, that belief belongs to inferior grades of intellect and information, and is therefore infirmity of mind. And in this the public teacher's judgment was travelling the common roadway, echoing the popular thought. The rude, profane, noisy, sneering, obscene infidelity of Voltaire's and Tom Paine's time

has gone out of vogue now. The sensation writers and preachers no longer scoff at God and religion. They concede that Christianity and the God of Christianity were useful in their time. But their time was before science illuminated the world. It was good for men to believe when they did not know anything. But now that they know everything they should believe no longer. It is not the science of these men I speak that the Church condemns, but their intellectual pride, their insolent assumption of the right to sit in judgment upon what God has revealed and to reject doctrines because they cannot comprehend them. Truth is eternal: that is to say, two and two made four yesterday, and two and two will make four tomorrow. It is not what we want, or what we fancy, it is reality. If it is weakness to believe the Church today it was a weakness, in all past days. If it is an infirmity in Pius IX., it was an infirmity in St. Augustine and St. Paul.

But was it an infirmity?

To say so you must maintain that it is folly to [be]lieve on any authority, or such authority as proposes Christianity.

Some men have the hardihood to say that no one but a fool will believe anything on authority; and this is the logical meaning of the theory of private judgment. But the saying will not bear examination. Nearly all our definite ideas come from teaching. All practical matters in society are carried on by the faith each man has in his neighbor. You can buy and sell and bargain only by trusting somebody's account of matters. A man who would attempt to double everybody's word would be accounted not so much a skeptic as a lunatic; and would speedily be disposed of by the society to which his theory would establish him an alien.

Is it weakness to believe on the authority which proposes Christianity? That authority is God's. He who of His nature is truth itself cannot deceive nor be deceived. When He says it is so, is it weakness for man to bow his head and say, "I believe"? He set His seal upon the doctrines of the Church by the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Is it an infirmity to have Him for a teacher?

162.

Editorial, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, November 9, 1861

Necessity of Faith.

Many persons are scandalized at the earnestness with which the Catholic Church urges the necessity of faith. What difference does it make, they say, what a man believes if only his actions be correct? If my neighbor is a good honest man, temperate, just, generous, am I going to exclude him from salvation, because he does not believe theoretically all that I believe? After all, life is action and not speculation; and therefore it matters not what are a man's opinions so long as his actions square with the rule of right.

This objection would be unanswerable, if men were all born in a state in which the force of circumstances is bound to bring them to felicity. He that is well needs not a physician. A man on dry land will tread unthinkingly on a plank which would be worth untold wealth to one struggling with the waters. In his parlor one sees but little use in a rope and bucket; but at the bottom of a well he would take a different view of their value.

We need faith not so much for the abstract value we can see in it, as because in the present order of Providence we cannot be saved without it. Its necessity is not abstract, absolute, belonging to every possible condition of human nature, but concrete, relative, belonging to our present actual condition. Faith is necessary *to us*.

We read legends of young princes stolen by "night tripping fairies," or cast away on desolate shores, who retained amid all their coarse surroundings the gentleness and magnanimity of their princely instincts, and never feel at home under the peasant roofs that sheltered them.

We are all born cast-away princes. As children of Adam and Eve we *should have had* paradise to sport in, God and the angels for companions, vast knowledge without labor, freedom from every movement of passion, and a soul garment of the precious grace of God. This priceless inheritance our first parents "wasted in riotous living," and dying left us beggars. We are princes in desire--but beggars in possession. We have the yearnings that belong to paradise--and our hearts are always sad in the midst of the thorns and thistles of earth.

Only faith can restore the inheritance, clothe us again with grace and lead us back to Eden. God has so appointed it. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be condemned. Without faith it is impossible to please God. There is no other name given among men whereby we can be saved but only the name of Jesus Christ.

No wonder then the Church insists on faith, since without it there are no means of salvation. God will condemn no man unjustly--but perhaps in the day of judgment many things will appear just to us that now seem unjust. At any rate salvation without faith is clearly impossible.

163.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, July 10, 1875 (4)

[The Necessity of True Faith]

There are some really honest men who think that what a man believes has nothing to do with his moral worth. "Creeds and dogmas are all nonsense," they have been saying, ever since David Hume. "Let a man do right, and who cares what he believes?" Now, it is true that a man [can] believe what he ought, and still be a bad

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man. But a man cannot, without believing as he ought, be good enough to reach salvation. He may be good enough to keep a tavern or be a congressman, but he cannot share the redemption of Jesus Christ. "Without faith it is impossible to be saved." "Unless a man be born of water and the Holy Ghost he shall not enter into the kingdom of God." "He that believeth not shall be condemned." "*This is eternal life*, that they know Thee, the only true God, and Whom Thou has sent, Jesus Christ."

To those with whom such plain declarations of Holy Writ have no weight, let us say that good works must begin from knowledge, and a full, clear and certain knowledge of what is good and what is evil cannot be in the mind without the light of divine faith. Therefore a man cannot do right in all things without faith. For one's "life to be right" he must have true faith and obey it!

164.

Editorial, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, August 31, 1861

Faith the Root of True Virtue.

Virtue, in general, or uprightness, is the regulation of the will by reason. When a man loves good precisely in the proportion in which it is really good, and shuns evil by the same rule, he is a perfect man. Now to seek good, and shun evil, in this manner, one must obviously know what is good and what evil. But this knowledge comes from faith alone. Philosophy may bring us to some conclusions, but these conclusions are too general, and too uncertain to be practically of service. Only faith can unravel the web of mystery that surrounds our being and destiny, and tells us unerringly what we are and why we exist. Therefore only faith can put us in the way of beginning to practice virtue. Whether with or without faith we must of course act--but without faith how shall we act? Shall we struggle to move to the right or left, forward or backward? Alas! in the thick darkness we know not which way is down or up, or right or left. Look at the world putting forth mighty and aimless efforts--seeking the pearl of price in money, in commerce, in literature, art, politics. Is there virtue in this? No. There is toil, mental effort, energy, industry, but no virtue, and no happiness.

Happiness is the fruit of virtue--and virtue is rooted in faith.

165.

Sermon, Book 2, No. 15

Faith Ennobles

[The Impact of Piety on the Intellect and Will]

"And he believed and his whole house." - John IV. 46-53

As the appearance of a landscape varies with every new position from which we look upon it, so human life has a different aim and seems more or less bright, or sad, according to the point of view from which one regards it.

To some, life seems an eager gold hunt; to others a rude, restless effort after rank and dignity; to others a time for frolic and bodily enjoyments. The first in writing a man's biography would tell in what speculations he failed or succeeded, and think all told. The second would tell what qualities he exhibited to the public, what intrigues he entered into, what opposition he overcame, and close the history. The third would recount the delicacies of his table, the quality of his amusements, the number of his dinners and balls, and find no more to say.

The Gospel I have just read shows that the Holy Ghost has his point of view, from which to look upon this life of ours. He sums up the history of the centurion with the words, "and he believed and his whole house," as though nothing more remained of his history. He does not tell us what became of him afterwards, whether he remained in the army and was promoted, whether he lived long or died early; whether he grew richer or poorer--but only that he received the Faith.

The Holy Ghost, therefore, sees nothing worth recording in any man's life beyond the fact that he believed. All else is merely accessory, and of no importance. This lesson is taught us in numberless other parts of scripture. Fear God and keep his commandments--for this is all man: one thing is necessary. Take no thought of what you shall [eat], or what ye shall drink or wherewith ye shall be clothed: seek first the Kingdom of God and his justice. Fear not them that can kill the body, but cannot hurt the soul.

The first disciples of Christ understood this doctrine and believed it. So they sold their property, gave its price to the Apostles, and gave themselves up to works of faith. They were led before judges and did not tremble; they were brought fact to face with fires and racks and wild beasts, and did not quail. These things could not rob them of their faith, and while faith remained they had lost nothing.

After those first ages, the deserts of Egypt were peopled with men who took the teachings of faith to be literal and sober truth, and went forth like Abraham of old, from kindred and home, and sought caves and lonely places wherein to live with Christ in God.

In the ages following cloisters were reared and the spirit of faith made solitudes

in the heart of cities where, all unconscious and regardless of the praise or blame of mortals, men and women labored silently to carry out the will of Christ, and to forget all but him.

Now-a-days Christianity is nominally the prevailing doctrine throughout the civilized world. Almost every one speaks well of Christ. Even those who deny his Church pretend to do so on the warrant of his word.

Yet Christ's doctrine, contained in those words, "one thing is necessary" and "Mary hath chosen the better part," is just as strange among us as it was among the Gentiles of old. Protestants regard as mad with fanaticism the young and gifted who shut themselves in the cloister, or consecrate themselves to the Altar. And even Catholics shake their heads, and say there was no need of such a sacrifice, and much good might have been expected of such a one if he had not thrown [his life] away.

There is a disposition among ourselves to treat piety towards God and remembrance of eternity as a weakness, to be indulged in only in secret, and on stated occasions. We speak highly of honesty, truthfulness, sobriety, industry; but are afraid to profess piety lest we be looked upon as weak minded. We willingly go to Church to hear Mass and vespers; but we leave Benedictions and beads and confraternity devotions to be attended to by those whom we esteem weak minded. Now let us meet this question fairly. Is piety towards God, attention to little devotions, eager[ness] to assist at Mass, not of obligation, to get Masses said for ourselves and those dear to us, to be present at beads, to strive to gain indulgences, an evidence of weakness of mind?

Nothing human is more admirable than intellectual power. The mind that can disenthral itself from traditionary prejudice, can look calmly into the mysteries that surround human life, can grapple with questions on which the common herd are content to wonder, and patiently pursue investigations that have seemed hopeless to those gone before, is something far sublimer than what is called the genius of the statesmen, the poet, the orator, the artist, or the conqueror. Does piety fetter such a mind? Does devotion to God throw darkness of the light of the soul, or benumb the energy of its faculties?

Next in nobility to mental energy is vigor of will to execute what reason dictates. In fact, the resolution that is unconquerable, the spirit that fears no obstacles and is bent with no discouragements, that is not cast down by unexpected trials, or rendered forgetful by long prosperity, generally attracts more respect from mankind than intellectual superiority. Is this will weakened by submission to God? Is this dauntless courage changed into cowardice by piety?

Take speculative reason or experience as a guide and put the question fairly to the proof. I am willing to appeal to both for an answer to the question, "does piety fetter the understanding?"

As to the effect of a devotional spirit on the intellect, I know it was the fashion of

the infidels [of the Enlightenment] of the last century to arrogate to themselves the exclusive proprietorship of reason; and if impudence were independence and levity the exercise of logical powers, they would have been right. They could reject the best authenticated facts on the grounds that they were miraculous, cast aside the most solid arguments because they favored Christianity, and connect ribaldry with the awful and holy Name of God.

Piety disposes one to believe in God, through whatever channel He speaks to men; to look on him as near to men and watchful over them; to accept what He teaches through His Church, without hesitation or cavil. It does not fetter but gives wings to the understanding. For God reveals nothing which takes from reason the necessity of labor. He never requires us to believe on insufficient grounds, but commands us to prove all things. And after we have accepted all His revelation, the field of science, in which reason is free to theorize and search, remains unabridged. The heavens are unrolled above us; the earth is spread out beneath us; and in each one mysteries in the solution of which the reason of man may toil for ages in vain. Thus love for God, who is the primal truth, begets in the soul the desire to behold truth wherever it may be found; it quickens the desire to learn, takes away all attraction from the pleasures of sense which distract and impede the employment of the mind, and so gives wings to thought.

It is not the proud scoffer, learning only to sneer at the mistakes of others, seeming to find more pleasure in knowing that others have erred than in learning the truth, that will explore the hidden things of science and throw floods of light upon his day and generation. The thoughts of those that aspire, says an English Protestant writer, are all prayer. It is pride and avarice, and ambition and sensuality, that fetter the understanding; piety, humility, purity, and disinterestedness set it free.

Look at the writings of the great teachers in the Catholic Church such as St. Chrysostom, St. Basil, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Anselm, Lanfranc, and Peter the Lombard. Although receiving with undoubting faith all the teachings of the Church, there is no difficulty against them, from any point of view, with which they fear to state fairly and grapple openly. St. Basil states candidly and refutes fairly all that the Arians had to say against the doctrine of the Trinity; St. Chrysostom, in his homilies, solves innumerable difficulties in the interpretation of scripture. St. Augustine pursues to its last analysis the dark question of the origin of evil; and discusses unshrinkingly the awful mysteries of grace and free will, of predestination and human merit. St. Thomas Aquinas runs over the whole field of Theology, from doctrines purely speculative to all the application of Christian morality to individual and social life, and slurs over not a single difficulty, leaves not a doubt unsolved.

Compare these intellectual giants to the shallow witlings who during the last century mistook impiety for knowledge, with the Voltaires, Rousseaus, Humes, and

Paynes, and then answer whether piety throws fetters over thought, or deadens mental vigor.

God resists the proud, in all their undertakings; and the mightiest monuments of their genius in the world of literature do but tell to the generations that come after them the sad story of their ruin. But the works of the just, from the inspired books of scripture to the letters of Christian Doctors, are imperishable as the human mind itself; and gather new respect and honor with the lapse of ages. "God resists the proud, but to the humble He gives grace."

Nor is piety opposed to that energy of will, that dauntless courage, which makes one ready to do all and dare all to accomplish the ends judgment has approved.

It is true that many have the impression that those given to piety are inert and dreamy. In some this impression arises from mistaking false for true piety. The piety that leads a man to neglect his business for his prayers; that causes women to go to Mass when they should be mending their children's clothes; that moves gossips to assemble and talk over the interests of the church when they should be attending to their households, is not true piety but only a shallow affectation of devotion.

Others think that even true piety unnerves the will and makes one listless and doless. So they call priests lazy and monks and nuns drones. But they are mistaken. True piety adds energy to the will and renders it unconquerable. I know that cupidity has a mighty power over the heart, that the greed of gain will stimulate a man to almost incredible exertions and sacrifices; but it can never give that fire to soul which is kindled in it by the sincere love of God. He whom the charity of Christ urgeth does not go merely but he runs, leaps, flies, in the path of duty. No obstacles appall him, no difficulties weary him, no delays dishearten him.

Look at St. Paul, traversing mountain, seas, and deserts, meeting dangers and enduring stripes, yet ever active even in chains, until the day of his crucifixion [beheading!] because the charity of Christ urged him. See St. Francis Xavier crossing the ocean, passing from island to island, teaching, preaching, and baptizing until he sank to the ground from sheer exhaustion; see him, at last, lie down to die, in the attempt to get into China, and, as he fixes his dying eye wistfully on the shore where new labors awaited him, do you think the love of God makes the heart sluggish and the will inert? Or, not to go back to other ages for illustration and proof, take those very cloistered nuns, whom shallow unbelievers have stigmatized as drones, and see whether their consecration to God leads them to aught like sloth. See them patiently and humbly spending the days, weeks, months, in attempting to instill virtue and learning into the minds of pupils often rude and wayward, and answer, does piety in these deaden energy?

Or again, follow them into the haunts of poverty or into the hospital wards, and as you see them devising means of relief for the one, or gliding from couch to couch in

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the other, night and day doing the office of nurses, and as you seem them wasting with watching and fatigue, yet still cheerful, and untiring, say does the love of God render these less practical, less energetic, than the spirit of the world.

No, my friends, it is not our piety but our want of piety that renders us inactive and sluggish.

166.

Editorial, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, October 13, 1860

Faith Perfects the Dignity of Nature.

Our age lays great stress on the dignity of the individual soul. Every little man you meet seems afraid that something is going to happen to his manhood. The illustrious Dr. Brownson says that a regard for their personal dignity keeps many young Catholics from continuing the practice of their religious duties; and non-Catholics often give their independence of thought as an objection to submitting to the authority of the Church.

Now assuming the Church to be infallible, the soul is not humbled but exalted by receiving her teaching. It is lifted up into a sphere of which it had no conception. As if upon a mountain unscalable by natural power, a new and vast world is opened to its view, nesting in a flood of supernatural light. The Trinity of God, the mystery of the Incarnation, the dignity of Mary, the mystery of the seven Sacraments, are revealed to it therein.

Is there any dignity in being ignorant of these things? Is there anything to boast of, in going into a Catholic church, and not knowing that Jesus Christ is there in the Sacrament; in living in God yet not knowing His will in our regard; in seeing baptism conferred and thinking it an idle form: in looking on the confessional, and regarding Penance as a superstition? If there is we cannot see it. Nor do we see how manhood is cherished by avoiding the practice of duty. What career is open to the young Catholic by the neglect of his religion? Politics? No man of any personal dignity can succeed as a politician; and success itself in the sacrifice of personal independence.

According to what standard of manliness, can forgetfulness of God, and neglect of his grace be manly? Is there anything noble in being the plaything of passion, the alternate sport of imbecile gaiety, and fruitless remorse, the laughing stock, and tool of calculating *roués*? According to the world's standard Christianity itself is unmanly. Jesus Christ did not consult His dignity when He associated with the poor, much less when He died on the cross. But the Church cannot accommodate herself to this standard. She cannot make herself agreeable to those who think their dignity outraged by sorrow for sin, nor has she anything soothing for those who defy God.

To those who submit to her precepts she can give the sublimest dignity--

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complete control so far as it is desirable over all that is created. He who takes God for his portion, has nothing to fear, and nothing to hope for from the world. He can defy all the accidents of life and triumph over every kind of opposition. Does any one want a personal dignity higher than this?

167.

Sermon, Book 1, No. 11

He who has Faith Possesses all Things

Measured by the rules of worldly wisdom, the assertion of the Apostle that he and the Christians to whom he was writing were to demean themselves as possessing all things, would seem an idle, if not insane, conceit. We know very well that the Christians were very poor. Their chief had nothing but a net and a boat to leave when he abandoned all things to follow Christ. They themselves were rude mountaineers from Galilee, laborers, and mechanics from the towns and villages, whose effects could be carried on a journey in a pocket handkerchief. They held their meetings by stealth in the upper rooms of private houses. They had no acquaintance among the scribes and Pharisees, the officials of the Roman Empire, the great money dealers, and merchant princes, the ruling classes of society. If they could have been all cut off by one stroke of persecution their disappearance would scarcely have been noticed, in social life or in the stock and money markets. Yet St. Paul tells them that they possess all things, meaning of course all the things that are worth possessing on earth and that he who has the gift of faith need want for nothing else.

This, beloved friends, is our belief. We believe in life everlasting, we have renounced the world to attain it. We have embraced the cross. We believe our faith to be the pearl of great price which the dealer gave all he had to purchase, the treasure hidden in a field, in exchange for which all other possessions are gladly to be given. Let us confirm ourselves in this belief by a few reflections today.

He who has faith possesses all things in two senses.

1. Because faith contains in itself all that the heart needs.
2. Because faith gives to man all the satisfaction he might derive from the possession of things he does not need.

After all, but one thing is necessary, to meet the approbation of God in the Judgment Day. It may be pleasant to have wealth, influence, learning, good health, kind friends, an honored reputation, but it is not necessary. Life's fitful fever will soon be over and its joys and sorrows, its desires and cares, its triumphs and defeats, [will] be remembered only as we remember the phantoms of a dream. Time is rushing by like an arrow, and while I speak the vast current of the universe is hurrying on to the close. The figure of this world is passing away. Nature is hastening on to dissolution. The

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years are getting weary of chasing each other across the stage of the present; and to us it were not amiss to imagine the cloud visibly gathering from which the Angel is to ring out the world's last knell above the graves of empires. Where is the use then of our struggling and panting after wealth, distinction, comfort, or weeping over their loss or absence? What else do we need but faith which secures Eternity?

These goods of earth are of no more [value] to us than to those who have gone before us. Call up them from their graves, or rather bring them for a moment from their unchanging life in Eternity, and ask them of what avail it is to them to have been great upon the earth.

The mighty and envied and feared of old, let them come, whether from heaven or hell, and give testimony before us. The kings and rulers of men, as they pass in long procession, show them the crowns they once wore, the sceptres they once wielded, point out to them amid the dust of their crumbling palaces the map of what were their dominions, and ask them of what avail were these, and they will pass mournfully on, each into the dwelling of his eternity.

The wise men and the rich men, the honored men who have gone down into the grave, of what avail to them now are the possessions in which they gloried? So of us one hundred years from now, of what avail will be things we possess today. Yet a hundred years from now, a thousand, ten thousand years from now when matter shall have gone to wreck and been as it were forgotten, we shall be living, as free of desires and activity as we are today. And throughout that long interminable existence, to have had faith, Catholic faith, while in this fleeting world will be the only advantage that we will remember or care for. For faith has in it the root of virtue, of innocence, of justice, hope and charity; and virtue alone lasts forever.

Therefore in strict truth he who has faith possesses all that man can need.

But besides what is absolutely necessary to man, Eternal life and the means of attaining it, there are other possessions which if not necessary are considered by all men very convenient and very pleasant and not at all forbidden by the law of God. Riches, health, comeliness, learning, rank, reputation are indeed superfluous, because a man can save his soul without them; but it would be hard to persuade men that it is not very pleasant to possess them. Yet incredible as it may seem to the spirit of the world, the word of Christ is true. Faith warmed by charity will supply the place of all these. For, in the first place, true charity makes us love our neighbor as our selves, and therefore instead of envying his prosperity, to rejoice as sincerely in it as if it were our own. Thus the true Christian has all the blessings of temporal goods without shouldering their cares, plucks the honey from life's roses without being pricked by its thorns, is happy in the enjoyment of those he loves.

In the second place, why are temporal goods pleasant to possess? Why do men toil for money, for power, for fame? Of course it is to gratify the inward craving of the

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heart after happiness. Something outside of itself is needed to satisfy the soul just as food is needed for the body, air for the lungs, light for the eye. The great mistake of life consists in not stopping to examine what that something is, but in dashing off, at the first dawn of reason in the soul, in pursuit of whatever wears the appearance of good.*

To the youth, pleasure deems this good, and restraint, whether of parental authority, of social usage, or inevitable circumstances, the great hindrance to happiness. If allowed its liberty, the young heart throws off control, disregards the laws of decorum, seeks to satiate itself in the wildest and most unbridled indulgences. After wearying, and wearing itself out in rioting through every meadow, and crowning itself with roses from every hedge, it at last discovers that it has been pursuing a phantom, that sensual pleasure is not what the soul is athirst for, and then begins the second round of pursuit dictated by ambition. This lasts through maturity. In the proud consciousness of strength, the man struggles on through triumph and defeat, until he reaches the pinnacle he aimed at. Then, feeling the void within him still, the hunger of the soul yet unsated, he is forced to conclude that power and fame are not precisely what he wanted. Then comes the last miserable deceit of which human nature is susceptible: the lust for gold, which dries up the heart, the sympathies, and freezes up the heart of old age, and endures until death, until the soul, having dragged all it could accumulate to the shore of the ocean of eternity, is suddenly swept out to return no more, leaving its baggage on the wharf.

Follow the soul through every one of these three stages of existence, and will you ever find it content? In pleasure it feels that the eye is not satisfied with seeing nor the ear with hearing. In the midst of power it sickens as often at the hollow and senseless adulation as at the treacherous and unexpected hostility. In wealth it struggles and pines and hopes and fears, and then despises its own emotions, and curses the chains that bind it to the dust.

Compare such a soul with the one which has taken God for its portion and borne the yoke of the Lord from youth. When pleasure allured it, it said man lives not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God. When ambition prompted, it answered it is written thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God nor try to be greater before men than He desires. When avarice urged, it has said thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and serve him alone, taking that measure of his goods which it pleases him to bestow. And so from the beginning to the end it has sought, content, not in gratifying caprice, but in regulating it, not in gathering earthly goods but in cutting off the love for them.

* Struck out at this point: Now if instead of having a thousand desires and aims, and living a life of turmoil and agitation in attempting to fulfill them, one could cut off all wish for unnecessary things, he would be far nearer to content. Content[ment] can be had only when what you have is equal to what you want.

168.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, July 1, 1876 (2)

Catholic Instincts

Catholic inner life springs entirely from the feeling inspired by faith. "I belong to God, and my home is in eternity with Him." This principle runs through all the intellectual, moral, social and emotional operations of the baptized soul, and gives to them a character quite distinct from that of the Pagan, however cultivated in intellect or refined in affections he may be. From the dawn of reason two great sources of corruption and degradation beset the soul, viz.: the animal appetites and the desire of human applause. Most pagans fall a prey to the first, and fill the world [with] gross vices such as gluttony, drunkenness, [and] impurity, with their attendant diseases and crimes. No pagans rise above the second, though their pride is sometimes so refined, so elegant, so apparently generous as to challenge admiration from those who are satisfied by appearance.

Catholic instinct keeps the young from the vices of appetite. Tempted by what is fair to the eye and taste, they say, will this gratification please my Master as it promises to please me? And when they see it is forbidden, they reject the suggestion and are saved. It preserves them also against the second. Their faith makes them understand the sentiment of St. Paul when he said, "I think it a small matter to be judged by man or by any human being: He that judges is the Lord." They are thus restrained from ever debating the expediency of wrong. Even in the outward bearing these Catholic instincts manifest themselves of having God alone for a master, make one modest, self-possessed and independent before others, making its mark on the very carriage and countenance. Who has not observed the broad but almost indescribable difference between pictures of Our Lord, the Blessed Virgin, and the Saints, and those of the masters whom love taught the expression to give to those venerable faces? Too much association with unbelievers, whether in conversation or in books, roots out the instinct of faith. When any Catholic has an unassailable logical system but has no sympathy for her [i.e. the Church's] practices, her devotions, her ceremonies, her views on social and practical matters, her past history, his Catholic instincts have died out, and faith will soon follow.

169.

Sermon, Book 2, No. 18

This appears to be a draft of the next item, "Lectures in St. Peter's Cathedral--Lent 1866, No. IV, The Spirit of Faith" (Item 170).

A Believing Spirit

A Believing Spirit is the spirit of Christianity. Our Redeemer never wrought a miracle of healing without exacting faith from those who begged it of Him as a condition of His performing it. He never works healing to the soul without making faith the condition of its performance. To believe is the door of the temple which is the dwelling of God with men, and wherein are all the treasures of supernatural grace. He who believes not may be a philosopher, or man of letters, a famous politician, a leader, but he cannot be a Christian, or make one step in the direction of eternal salvation, or lay up a single treasure which moth and rust cannot corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal. He may possess this world; but he cannot gain any foothold in the good of the world to come.

Docility or a willingness to be taught the things of God was directly repudiated by the great principle which alone could justify the religious movement of the XVI. century, called by its friends, "the Reformation,"--the principle of private interpretation.

Erasmus, the precursor of German Rationalists, tried to reconcile this principle with Catholic doctrine, and maintained that baptized persons coming to the use of reason were bound to suspend their assent to the truths of faith until their own investigations would produce in their minds a rational conviction. But this opinion was condemned as heretical by the holy Council of Trent, in the canons on Baptism; and cannot be held in the communion of the Church.

This doctrine of the Church has been artfully seized upon by her enemies and tortured to support the calumny against her that she fetters minds. She reproves the spirit of inquiry, they say, she holds the intellect in bondage, because she fears the light.

Now I do not wish to disguise the fact that the Church demands docility. She claims to teach with authority. She is the mouthpiece of Jesus Christ and whoever despises her, despises Him. Hence she allows none of her children to doubt her teachings in any particular. They may not say, "I will accept five of the seven Sacraments," or "eleven of the articles of the Creed but no more. Here I still agree with the Church, there I will reform it." The moment they claim the right to sit in judgment on her they cease to be of her fold. And to those entering at an adult age, she says in unequivocal tones, "Outside my portals you may investigate as many different points as you please, you may sift my claims to be the authorized teacher of Christ's religion to any extent; but entering my portals you must lay aside all doubt, and all thought of your own knowledge, all preconceived ideas as to what Christian doctrine is going to be or ought to be, and set yourself simply to listen and learn." "Except you become as little children you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." This submission of the understanding the Church exacts inexorably; and the believing spirit cheerfully renders it.

But is a believing spirit a wise spirit? Is it consistent with a proper degree of self

respect, or, as our age delights to call it, with manhood? Have I a right to surrender myself to the guidance of another in the choice of my duty to God and my path to eternity? This question fairly asked has a right to a plain answer.

In the first place, then, I answer that Jesus Christ commended the inclination to trust in those among whom He lived and taught. Now as He is the divine teacher and savior of men, it is not likely that he would commend any surrender of what ought not to be yielded. It seems far more probable that those who hold the contrary opinion are mistaken. He commands us to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil, but nothing of our dignity or of our real happiness. Yet does He command us most emphatically to renounce the spirit of doubt or the unwillingness to believe. "He that believeth not shall be condemned." "Be not faithless but believing." The great mistake the Jews made, and what they were condemned for, was in supposing that the Messiah must teach in accordance with their notions, and not a doctrine wholly His own. Therefore the spirit of incredulity is no excellence of human nature, but a vice of our sinful condition

In the second place the Church does demand docility of us [but not] without showing us a reason for it. She does not in one breath tell us to search the scriptures, and in the same declare to us the faith she wants us to find there. She does not mock us by telling us that we are free to find our own faith, and at the same time present us formulas of faith--Westminster Confessions--and Thirty-Nine Articles--to give our adhesion to. Whatever her enemies may allege against her, at least she can not be charged with insincerity in her claims. She claims to teach with infallible authority relying on the assistance of her divine Founder who has promised to be with her all days. But the infallibility of the teacher is ample reason for the trust of the hearer. God's word is proof enough for whatever He may choose to say. The Church stands before the world as the mouthpiece of God. The words she speaks are not from herself but from Him who commissioned her. Even humanly speaking, the Council of Trent was a body venerable for the learning, the integrity, the piety of its members. But our adherence to the definitions of that council is not deference to the learning or piety of those who composed it, but submission to [the] Holy Ghost, who guided its decisions. In like manner the vast assemblage that witnessed the promulgation of the decree concerning Mary's Immaculate Conception was one of rare wisdom, rectitude and purity. The question had been studied with wonderful research and industry. But when the decision came and the Catholic world answered back, "I believe," that act of faith was not "I trust the venerable Pius IX. and those who counseled him; I am sure men so learned as the cardinals and bishops cannot be deceived and [those] so sincere cannot wish to deceive;" but it was, "I believe all the Church teaches because what she teaches Jesus Christ teaches, and now that she teaches the Blessed Virgin Mary to have been conceived without sin, I believe it, firmly, as I believe in God."

But in that act, says the cavalier of religion, you surrender your reason, and put

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fetters on your soul, and when you do this you yield your dignity as a rational being. Softly, my friend. You surrender your reason when you give yourself to false teaching. You put fetters on your soul when you believe a lie. But if your teacher is true, then to be taught is to be enlightened; and to be enlightened is to grow in dignity as a rational being.

The liberty of doubting is nothing ennobling, but the offspring of ignorance, a disease of the soul, and not an excellence. On any other subject than religion a man would be ashamed to say, "I still doubt," because that means "I am still ignorant." And yet they would have us believe that we surrender our liberty by learning from God!

"But," it is urged, "if I have a credulous spirit I shall be everybody's dupe. And what character is more despicable than his who is outwitted and imposed upon by all?" I know of only one more pitiable, and that is his who is perpetually deceived and imposed upon by himself. It is humiliating to be deceived; but of the two I would rather be deceived by others than by myself. You refuse to be taught because you fear to be deceived? The spirit of faith is a disposition to believe where there is no reason for disbelieving, not to believe against reason. The spirit of unbelief is to doubt, until there is reason over and above authority for believing. The one says, "I believe no one will deceive me unless he has something to gain by it." The other says, "I believe everyone will deceive me unless he has something to lose by it." The one says, "If I undertake to guide myself, I shall surely go astray." The other, "Unless I guide myself I shall undoubtedly be lost." The one is a spirit of self distrust, and in so far is wise. The other a spirit of self conceit, and in so far folly.

[Notes on the reverse of the last page:

Appeal to the doubter

Are you not as other men? What does their wisdom

Even in yourself, What knowledge have you of your own. A. None.]

170.

Lecture, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, March 28, 1866

This appears to be an expanded, spoken version of the handwritten text "A Believing Spirit is the Spirit of Christianity" (Item 169).

Lectures in St. Peter's Cathedral--Lent 1866, No. IV.

The Spirit of Faith.

The spirit of Christianity is a believing spirit. Those who would come to Christ must have a willingness to be taught. When He was on earth, it was what He always exacted from those in whose behalf He wrought miracles of healing; and it was the disposition He most frequently commended. "O woman, great is thy faith," He said to

her who had exclaimed, "Even the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." "Thy faith hath made thee whole," to her who had touched the hem of His garment, to cure her issue of blood. The dying thief was pardoned by his docility. St. Peter was made chief of the Apostles and head of the Church in return for his faith.

Nor would he brook the contrary disposition to cavil and criticize. When He promised His flesh to eat, and His blood to drink for the life of the world, there were some who caviled and said how can this man give his flesh to eat, and his blood to drink? He did not stop to argue with them, but added, "Amen, I say unto you, except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood you shall not have life in you," repeating what they caviled at more emphatically than He had at first expressed it. And to the Disciples he made no explanation, but bluntly asked them, "Will you also go away?" He would never brook, with all his patience, the insolent spirit of criticism and dispute. "He that believeth not shall be condemned." Without believing, no man can be a Christian. He may be a philosopher, a statesman, a man of letters, a leader in society--but he cannot be a Christian. Faith is the door by which the temple, which is the dwelling of God with men, must be entered, wherein are all the treasures of grace, all the aids to salvation. No man can be born of God who is not willing to be taught of God.

In our age docility is not esteemed so highly as Jesus Christ esteemed it. The world does not say, "Blessed are those who have not seen, and have believed," but "blessed are those who never believe until they see!" It is a cold, hard characteristic in which the age takes pride to cherish suspicion, and holds for a motto, "You cannot deceive me." Incredulity is considered a mark of wisdom, and when the child has learned to contradict its father, all the neighbors clap their hands and say, "How talented it is and how shrewd it is growing." And things have come to such a pass that many believe credulity to have been the chief defect of the ages gone by--and look upon a willingness to be taught as synonymous with ignorance, superstition, and all the other defects which made the Middle Ages "dark."

As the age disagrees with Jesus Christ on this point, of course it must be mistaken. He who is the Truth cannot commend as becoming what is really unbecoming. If docility were unwise, unworthy of a man, He never would have praised it. He came to build, not to destroy. What good he finds in us he leaves there, simply elevating and perfecting it. When, therefore, He praised the disposition to believe, He by that fact proved the disposition to be good.

Nor would the Church exact docility unless it were commendable. Unquestionably she does exact it. The mouthpiece of Jesus Christ to men, she bears witness in every age to His teachings, and in her utterances she will take nothing from her children but faith and obedience. They may not doubt, and criticise, and argue. They may not say, "Five of the seven sacraments I will admit and not the other two, or

eleven of the twelve articles of the Creed I believe but not the twelfth." They must accept all, or cease to be her children, and become as heathen and publicans. To those asking admission into her fold she says, "Outside my pale you may study and sift, and interrogate as much as you please; you may put my claims to the severest scrutiny. But once within the door of Baptism, investigation ceases, and learning begins. You must then lay aside all your preconceived notions of what faith is to be, and find out from my teaching what it *is*. From me you get, at the same time, the truth and the standard of truth; and though you were master of all the dead languages, all science, all philosophy, all criticism--you have to take your place on the bench with the little children, and learn with them from 'Who made you?' down to the end of the 'Corporal Works of Mercy.'"

One attempt has been made to introduce the spirit of doubt into the Church. Erasmus, the precursor of the German Rationalists, and the ablest of them all, taught that baptized children, coming to the age of reason, were bound to suspend their faith until they could examine the doctrines of the Church and yield assent from personal conviction. But this opinion was expressly anathematized in the Council of Trent, and no one can maintain it without incurring excommunication. No one can be a Catholic and question the teaching authority of the Church.

But in demanding the assent of the understanding, the Church does not act inconsistently or arrogantly. She does not tell you to study the scriptures, and at the same time show you a Westminster Confession, or Thirty-nine Articles, or any other of the five hundred religious platforms, that have been invented since the XVI. century, and give you to understand that those are the doctrines you must find in its inspired pages. She does not tell you you are free, and, at the same time, add, "Woe to you if you use your freedom to believe what I condemn, or to reject what I hold." She tells you from the beginning that you have no one but Herself to learn religion from--that you may not read the Scriptures without her permission, or understand them otherwise than according to her interpretation. And she does this, claiming to be infallible. She cannot err. Therefore, she cannot permit you to doubt. Imagine that God came in person to teach you; suppose that the heavens bowed down to meet the earth, and the Almighty would reveal Himself to you face to face, would you think of caviling, of doubting, and arguing, and suggesting difficulties? Rather would not your soul bow down with your body before Him, and say in trembling, adoring awe, "Speak, Lord, thy servant heareth." But if the sight of His majesty, as far as mortal eye can bear the revelation of it, would extort unhesitating truth [faith?], ought the same authority compel the same docility when the Majesty is veiled. Is He not as much the master of mind and the fount of truth when He speaks through the Church with the splendor of His glory hidden behind the wall of the visible? The Church claims that He does speak through her. She claims it in virtue of her commission to teach and the promise of Jesus Christ. His message was to tell men. But He could not reach all men with His lips of

flesh. Therefore, He appointed the Apostolic College and those whom the Apostles might ordain their associates and successors to represent His person and speak His words to "every one coming into the world." "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." Here was their duty. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved. He that believeth not shall be condemned. Behold their authority--dispensing salvation and reprobation. "And, lo! I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world." There was the strength in which they were to be the bearers of life and death to all generations. In this character the Church presents herself before the world and demands docility. In this character she proposes doctrine, interprets scripture, puts an end to controversies, condemns heresies. All her mode of action but repeats the words of her Founder, "He that believeth shall be saved--he that believeth not shall be condemned."

"But this is asking too much," say the enemies of faith. "To surrender one's reason, to put on chains, is to yield up freedom and manhood." How unjust is the cavil! To surrender one's reason to a teacher of falsehood, is, indeed, to put on chains--for ignorance and error are the only bonds of the intellect; but to yield your reason to the Teacher of truth is to make a large step toward freedom. The liberty of doubting is no true liberty, but shameful ignorance. "I doubt" means "I do not know the truth." "I am an ignoramus on this point." Do you call it freedom not to know who created you, who redeemed you, or what are the means of salvation? Is it freedom not to know whether to believe Christianity or the Mormon? Not to know whether there are sacraments; how to get the remission of sin; in short to be ignorant of all [that] concerns you most, and will concern you forever? On what subject but religion could men's judgment become so far perverted as to make them glory in their ignorance, and call it liberty?

"But the Church, by teaching dogmatically, narrows the field of investigation, and discourages the spirit of inquiry!" Rare logic of modern rationalism! By answering questions you discourage the spirit of inquiry! By giving information, you narrow the field of investigation! Why then, let the men of science stop explaining, let the astronomers put up their telescopes, the chemist lay aside their assayings. Every truth they establish, every discovery they make, will narrow the field of investigation! Almighty God must not tell us that He made us, or what He wills us to do, in order to be saved, because if we get certain information we will be no longer free to doubt and speculate, and, in the wild universe, in the suns, stars, planets, air, earth, mountains, oceans, rivers, birds, beasts, spiritual existence and phenomena, there will be nothing left whereon to employ our spirit of inquiry! How stupid is the spirit that science puffeth up! that can see nothing to study in the almost measureless worlds, whose very atom is full of truth and of mystery!

But in sober truth, this cavil is but the offspring of inconsistent prejudice. If one were to narrow down his belief to what he knows of his own personal observations or

reasoning, what a little vessel would contain it all! In the first place he must strike all that happened before he came to the use of reason--for he has to take that on faith. He must acknowledge himself of unknown parentage--and without antecedents. In the second place, he must renounce all knowledge of distant places, as that comes by hearing. Besides that, he must believe in no science he has not demonstrated himself, and in the existence of no natural phenomenon that his own senses did not witness. Then he must eliminate all his ideas of the thought, feeling, belief, opinions, affections of others, for he can only know them from hearing. He must doubt language itself, for he has to take it on trust. In one word, to be a consistent doubter, he must be a confirmed lunatic and know nothing. Nature is a safe teacher in this regard. Naturally, we believe by instinct. That is, the antecedent probability is on the side of authority; and that we were told a thing is reason enough for believing it, until it is disproved. This is the way nature exhibits herself in children. Those who are without guile say "He will not deceive me, unless he can gain something by it." The doubter says, "he will deceive me whether it is his interest or not." Nature says, "I am ignorant and need instruction. I will seek it from those about me." The doubter says, "I am wise, shrewd, prudent, and will trust to myself alone." Nature loves the truth and is humble. Doubt loves itself, is full of pride. Why do you call it wise, O self-sufficient man, to trust yourself and distrust others? Wherein are you a better guide than those whose authority you repudiate? Whence came to you the wisdom that can be the standard and measure for truth, and make your judgments safer than those of other men? When were you carried into the abysses of the past that you might bring back its treasures of knowledge? Or through the dark future, that you should be sure of your ability to guide yourself through its mysterious depths? When was the world of spirits laid bare to your view that you should be able to form opinions, and decide questions relating to its nature and constitution, known only to those who have entered the gates, at whose threshold the prophets of God have ever praised in adoration?

Self-conceit is not knowledge. By thinking you know enough to judge for yourself you do not gain the necessary wisdom. You may assume the responsibility, but you cannot thereby get the necessary qualifications. You may extinguish every light but the one you imagine to be in yourself. But the light within you will still be darkness! Guided by another, so long as you hate sin, you may be deceived, though never to your spiritual loss. But it is far better to be deceived by another than to be deceived by one's self. It is better to err on the side of docility than on the side of pride. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted; he that exalteth himself shall be humbled." If such a thing were supposable, I would a thousand times rather err, following the Church, than to be right, trusting to my own wisdom. It is better to belong to Jesus Christ, taking what He will give, than to belong to the world, snatching all we could exact.

"Blessed be the holy name of God, who has raised up a house of salvation *in the*

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midst!" not far above us, where study, and learning and speculation are needed to reach it--but down on a level with us, where the untaught peasant, the overworked laborer, the dull-brained clown, the simple-minded child, can learn more than philosophers ever found out, or Rationalists can ever learn. Praised forever be Jesus Christ, whose divine wisdom invented a teaching Church to bring His doctrines home to the comprehension of the humble, the unlearned, the great mass of men.

My Catholic brethren, we have the gift. Let us appreciate its value, prefer it to kingdoms and thrones, and consider riches as nothing in comparison with it. We can cherish it best by obeying it in all things, for it grows in the docile and reverent heart. We may have many precious gifts to thank God for--but none worthy of gratitude so devout as that we are Roman Catholics.

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Lecture, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, January 28, 1863

Lectures in St. Peter's Cathedral, No. 2.

[The Credulity of Catholics.]

The subject of to-day's lecture is a very common perplexity of Catholics, and a very common theme of objection among non-Catholics--the credulity of the members of the Catholic Church.

Non-Catholics often see, or imagine, that they are better informed on many topics than Catholics. They know more of the world, of the common branches of science and business. Yet, when they offer to lend their aid to instruct the Catholic in religion, they are surprised at meeting with rebuff, and at being told that their notions are erroneous. A kind non-Catholic lady once had the goodness to teach her servant by reading the catechism to her. When she came to the declaration, that the priest judges sin in the name of Christ and forgives it with His authority, "Now Catherine," said she, "do you really believe that?" "If it is in the book I believe it," was the answer. This, to the lady, was weak credulity, and an example of Catholic ignorance. So it is with most non-Catholics. They think that faith is unreasonable, because it is unreasoning.

On the other hand, Catholics are often conscious of having made but little study of Christian doctrine beyond simply finding out what it is. They know that they have not read the scriptures in Hebrew or Greek; that they have not pored over the works of learned theologians. They know that there are a thousand and one books of religious doubts, speculations, and absurdities they have never read. And they sometimes are tempted to fear that they have believed too hastily, without sufficient examination, in the doctrines taught by the Church. This is particularly the case when they encounter some dogmatic doubter, some self-styled thinker who will acknowledge that he does not know what to believe about religion, but will yet lay down with solemn

positiveness that Catholicity must be wrong.

"Why do you accept so many articles of faith, so many commands of God, and of the Church, so much teaching about the Sacraments on the mere assertion of the Church?" says the doubter without.

"Sure enough," the tempter within suggests, "how do you know but that, after all, the Church may be deceiving you? Have you examined the warrant of her authority?"

The difficulty is this:

What right has any one to believe, without examination, "all the sacred truths the holy Catholic Church believes and teaches?"

And it is not without its weight. Why is not the belief of the uneducated, of the young, of all who have made no examination for themselves, unreasoning as it unquestionably is, irrational, and not acceptable to God who wills the homage of the intelligence?

To meet it fairly, let us see what is faith and what are the conditions required to make it reasonable.

I do not take faith in the canting sense, in which many sects speak of a vague thing, *caught* like a cold in camp meetings and revivals, called "saving faith;" but of faith in the ordinary sense of the word--belief, or assent to a proposition on authority, as distinguished from knowledge, or assent to a proposition on what is called evidence. What I can see, feel, taste, hear, smell, or perceive by reasoning--I know of myself. What is past in time, distant in place, remote from reason--I can only know on authority. I *know* there is a city of Cincinnati because I have seen it--I *believe* there is a city of Canton in China because I have been told so on good authority. I *know* that all the angles formed by straight lines about a given point are equal to four right angles, because that follows from the definition of right angle. I *believe* that Alexander the Great ruled Macedon, that Demosthenes spoke Greek, and Cicero wrote Latin on the authority of history. I *know* that there is a God, because I see things existing that could not exist without Him. I *believe* that there are three persons in one substance in God on the authority of the Church.

There is, evidently, as much certainty in faith as in knowledge. I am as certain of the existence of Louis Napoleon, whom I never saw, as I am of that of Abraham Lincoln, whom I saw in the procession through the streets of Cincinnati about two years ago. The only difference is that in knowledge I am moved to admit the truth by something within myself, and in faith I rely upon others. Faith is called human when the authority on which it is based is human, as in matters of history, geography, and current events. It is called divine when the authority is God's, as is the case with the doctrine of the incarnation, redemption, the Church, the Sacraments, and the like.

Now, there was once a sect of so-called philosophers who impugned even human faith and denied all certainty. They are styled Pyrrhonists, from a Greek of that name

who first puzzled his neighbors with their sophisms. During the past century a few English theorists undertook to revive this system of doubting, but met with poor success among that well-fed people, and the defenders of it died out quite rapidly when they found that everybody thought they were jesting. With this class of philosophers no controversy need be held. For, although they invite discussion and try to wrangle, they must, on their own principles, doubt whether they differ from us or not, and therefore have no right to assert or deny anything.

This much premised concerning the nature of faith, I wish to lay down a principle for whose demonstration I am going to appeal to your own common sense and experience. It is this:

To believe is a dictate of nature, a law of the human mind. Reliance on the authority of others is the rule and examination is the exception. Nature bids us--not to doubt until we examine--but not to examine until we find reason to doubt. What others tell us we are to hold as true, unless positive reasons forbid. The presumption is always on the side of belief, and the burthen of proof rests upon doubt. Hence the person brought up in any belief need never ask, "Why do I believe?" but, "Why should I not believe?"

For proof that this is the law of the human mind I appeal to your own common sense and experience. The law of human reason is the way in which human reason spontaneously acts. Now, does not human reason spontaneously trust to authority? How, but by authority, does the child learn the names of things it sees? How else does it know that the flower-season is spring, the harvest-time summer, fruit-time autumn, and the ice-term winter? How, but by faith, can it know its parentage, its rights of property, its social standing, or its kindred, its superiors, equals and inferiors?

Suppose a child to adopt the principles of doubt and examination, what absurdities would follow! It must suspend respect for father and love to mother until investigation had proved them to be really such. It must not call any one brother or sister or uncle or aunt or cousin until after rigid scrutiny. It must not accept the use of money until it can see whether that money was lawfully acquired. It must not believe there is land beyond the seas until it has crossed them. Why, such a child would be a *lusus naturæ* [a sport of nature], a very monster of impudence and folly.

We have reason to believe that our American children are well stocked with assurance in this very advanced age; but the boldest of them would be a model of bashfulness in comparison with the child who, starting from the principle of doubt, would regulate its demeanor by private investigation. It would be obliged to say to its mother, "Madam, you say you are my mother, and it may be you are, but I must withhold filial affection and duty from you until I can investigate the matter for myself," and to its father, "Your claim, sir, to parental relationship with me is a serious one, and may be well founded, but it must be investigated before I admit it. I cannot consent to

any blind credulity; before I believe I must examine, and then, if you really are my father, you may rely upon it I will treat you accordingly." Such conduct would be monstrous and all mankind would justly execrate it. The principle that authorizes it therefore is execrable. The principle of doubting all that is not proved does authorize it, and therefore the law of credulity is natural in the human mind. But what is natural to reason must be reasonable. Therefore, it is reasonable to believe on authority.

The principle on which the law of faith is founded is this: that men will not lie *gratis*--that parents, teachers, who have no motive for deceiving those under their charge, will not deceive them. Parents and teachers may be mistaken, it is true, but it must be proved that they are mistaken before it is right to doubt them.

This is true of what they teach on every subject. Nature dictates that the child follow the teaching of the parent until there is a valid and positive reason for departing from it.

Look at the tenacity with which all people cling to tradition. The followers of the Reformation, after three hundred years of estrangement from the Church, still cling to certain of her festivals and many of her doctrines. In Europe certain practices that had a meaning only in a paganism that vanished from the earth fifteen hundred years ago are still kept, because they have been handed down from sire to son through the generations.

This power of tradition demonstrates that the law of credulity is in human nature and cannot be eradicated.

We have a set of men now-a-days who decry what is old; but let them say what they please, they cannot alter human nature--they cannot take away from the mass of men, nay, not even from themselves, the spirit of credulity, the irresistible inclination to accept authority up to the point when it is proved to be worthless.

Neither has the mind any choice of subjects in its acceptance of teaching. The child allows itself to be taught equally the things concerning the body and the things concerning the soul, and it believes what it is taught of both until it has positive reason to doubt.

So the Catholic child learns the sign of the cross first of all. It learns that it came from God to go back to God, by faith, hope and charity. It is taught to pray to the Virgin Mary, to invoke the Saints, to venerate images, to make use of holy water, to go to Confession, to believe in the Sacraments, to trust the Church. When such a child grows up and comes in contact with unbelievers, they have no right to put the question, "Why do you believe?" but must answer the question, "Why should I not believe?"

Now it is utterly impossible for any one even to show any valid reason why a Catholic should doubt. To do so, it would be necessary to demonstrate, that Christ was not God or that He founded no Church, or that the Catholic is not the Church He founded. But none of these can ever be demonstrated, as the enemies of the Church

implicitly confess, by making the ground of their opposition to her misrepresentation of her doctrines, and prejudice against her supposed intentions. Therefore, it is always reasonable for a Catholic to believe, and always criminal for him to doubt.

But, it will be said, this theory of faith is a sword with two edges. If it cuts off doubt from the person brought up a Catholic, it cuts off doubt from him who is educated a pagan, a Jew, a Mahometan, a member of the Greek schism, or a Protestant. If the Catholic child must be a Catholic out of respect to the teaching of its parents, why then the non-Catholic child must remain non-Catholic for the same reason. I answer, in the first place, that the theory was not invented for the benefit of the Catholic Church, but was laid down because it is the truth; and the Catholic Church is quite willing to take all the harm that truth can give her. In the second place, I answer that while the principle of credulity will always keep a Catholic firm in his faith, it will not keep the non-Catholic what he is.

The principle, you remember, is that every one must continue to adhere to the teaching he has received, until he has positive reason for doubting. Now, while the Catholic never can have any reasons for doubting, the non-Catholic cannot escape them.

Of the classes above enumerated I suppose I need not speak of pagans; for I presume all will concede that there is enough of intrinsic absurdity in paganism to start doubts in any mind. Or of the Mahometans, for there are none here.

The man educated a Jew has the Scriptures; and when he reads in them that the Messiah was to come before the scepter should pass from Juda, he cannot but suspect that those who maintain that he has not yet come, are laboring under a mistake.

The Greek schismatic, who is taught to believe in the Apostolic Church, cannot but be startled when he finds that he is not in communion with Peter, upon whom that Church was built.

Lastly, the Protestant has abundance of positive reasons for doubting the teaching of his parents. In the first place, the fundamental principles of Protestantism authorize doubt. That principle is private judgment--or, as Guizot calls it, a revolt against authority. The parent that teaches his child Protestantism logically renounces his right to exact belief. It is true that Protestants do teach their children; but that fact only demonstrates that Protestant principles cannot, in the conduct of life, overcome human nature.

Next, he has reason to doubt in hearing himself called a Protestant. He cannot protest reasonably without examining what he protests against. That examination would disclose that the doctrine taught to him as Christian was never discovered until fifteen hundred years after the death of Christ; and surely, in this, there is grave reason for doubting.

Again, the wide diversity of opinions among people called Protestants must startle him into doubt. When people believe differently someone must be wrong,

although no one may be right. He must examine to find whether those in the wrong may not have been his teachers.

But there is no need of multiplying arguments to show that Protestantism is a system of doubt. It is so well understood, that in most sects no religious instruction is given to the young--a tacit acknowledgement that they have none to give.

It is then demonstrated that the law of credulity is natural and reasonable; that doubt of authority is not the normal state of the mind but the reverse; and examination is not needed for belief but for unbelief.

Archbishop Whately, Protestant Archbishop of Dublin--whose words are of weight since he has an income of \$100,000 a year--says, in the appendix to his condemned *Logic*, that in the beginning the Protestant Reformers were innovators, and therefore upon them rested the *burthen of proof*: but that after the Reformation was established in England, then the Catholics became innovators, in trying to re-establish their religion, and the presumption rested against them. But his is a very shallow sophism. For the reformers always remain Protestants, and therefore to the latest generation are obliged to show that they had a right to protest. They are everlastingly in this quandary, that they can only subsist as long as the Church they war upon. If there were no Catholic Church there could be no Protestants, since then the protest would be against nothing. So that if they could succeed in blotting out the Church, they would by that very fact blot out themselves.

The presumption is always in favor of the teaching authority, and the enemy of the authority is obliged to show not merely that it may be not good authority, but that it is positively unsound.

When a man is brought before a court, he is presumed to be innocent until he is proved to be guilty. When anyone makes a promise, he is presumed to make it in good faith until there is evidence of malice. So the presumption always rests in favor of Catholic truth, with those educated Catholics, and the burthen of proof ever rests on the shoulders of its enemies. When a Catholic is suddenly puzzled with some new objection, let him examine whether it impeaches the authority of the Church. If not, it need not be entertained. If so, let him carry it to some judicious friend for solution.

There can be no really valid objection brought against the Church, for as Dr. John Henry Newman said, before he became a Catholic, "the system is logically unassailable." If you cannot solve the difficulty that is proposed to you, some one else, to whom you should apply for instruction, can.

But you will better consult your happiness by spending your time and energies not in inquiring curiously into difficulties and their solutions, but in earnestly fulfilling the will of God. The Church is guided by the Holy Spirit of truth in all her teachings. If we yield simple obedience to her she will keep us in all our ways. It is better, says St. Thomas A Kempis, to feel compunction than to know its definition. It is better to have

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unquestioning faith than to know how to dispute about it. Reason and study as we may, we never can find any other motive for believing that the authority of the Church--the very motive we had in our guileless childhood. It is better to spend our lives in loving God and in doing the works of love, than in barren speculations. Blessed are they who have not seen and have believed. Blessed they who have never thought of knowing anything but Jesus Christ and Him crucified, who have had His name ever on their lips and in their hearts. For them the evils of life have no sharpness, the "fear of death does not touch them." Their spirits live in a light from eternity, which at first falling upon them faintly as through a glass, goes on brightening as they live more tenderly, until death draws the curtain and darkness flies away forever before the ineffable radiance of the unveiled throne of God.