

THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

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THE question of the reintegration of Christendom has been brought before the public of this country recently by an article and a series of letters in *The Times*, and before the whole world by the Holy Father's address on Christmas Eve. I hope that some of the following remarks may help to explain to non-Catholics why it is that we Catholics do not seem to be able to join in whole-heartedly with some of the attempts that are made from time to time to effect that reintegration by a process of corporate reunion of the separated Christian bodies; although we are at least as anxious as any other body to see reunion achieved. And we believe that we hold from God the key to reunion.

There is a homesickness for visible unity in the Christian world today, thank God. The crisis of our civilization, the growth of secularism, the menace of conscious deliberate organized anti-Christian forces have no doubt in part occasioned this heightened sense that Christians must unite in face of common perils. And again, the serious disadvantages (to use no stronger language) that attend upon Christian missionary effort, both at home and abroad, through the mutual contradictions and competition of the various Christian communions, are perhaps more vividly realised at present than at most times in the past three hundred years. But surely the driving force of what I may call the reunion movement is something deeper, more native to Christianity as such, than even these grave practical considerations. Surely the dynamism of the movement, or movements, comes from a growing conviction that disunity can only be justified by a virtual denial of something that is of the very essence of Christianity, that it would mean contradicting the intention of God Incarnate. Did he not himself remind us that a kingdom or a house divided against itself *cannot stand*? And have we not his assurance that the Church which he would raise up *would* stand triumphant against the worst assaults of its enemies until the end of the world?

St Paul saw Christ and the dispensation inaugurated by him, a

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dispensation which was itself a historical phenomenon operating in the world of real history, as the great unifier of Jew and Gentile, breaking down the middle-wall of partition between them. He saw that unity in Christ was deeper than our racial and cultural differences—in him there is neither Greek nor barbarian, slave nor free, but all are one person in Christ. In its at-one-ment with God in Christ mankind was to find its at-one-ment with itself.

Now here I wish to lay down a principle which I hope may be acceptable, and which will underlie all I have to say. It is the principle that visible Christian unity, however it is attained and maintained, must be basically a unity of doctrine. Spiritual sympathy, however real and deep, is not adequate as a foundation of visible unity. I may have warm and deep spiritual sympathy with an orthodox Jew, Moslem or Buddhist. But since he does not agree with me in what I hold to be essential religious beliefs, he and I cannot unite or even co-operate in practical religious matters, except within a most restricted field and at a very superficial level. Why? Because our religious practice, his and mine, must flow from our religious beliefs. That is the nature of deliberate human action—it is the practical consequence of knowledge or belief. It flows from the evaluation of a historical situation; and such evaluation requires a criterion, a yard-stick, a standard of values, which can only be provided by our intellectual convictions. My own religious efforts, as a Christian, must be to bring men to find in God Incarnate their saviour, their support and their hope; but for the orthodox Jew the very notion that Jesus is the Lord God must be a frightful blasphemy. How can he unite with me, or I with him? No, religious unity, and therefore Christian unity, presupposes agreement as to the essentials of religious faith.

How far does such agreement at present extend? Well, on this particular issue of unity there is today at least a widespread agreement among Christians that visible Christian unity is a consummation much to be desired, with perhaps a disposition to agree that unity of some kind was not only hoped for by Christ but established by him and destined to endure throughout history. It is not my purpose today to dwell at length on the interior unity of the Church, a unity which will be fully realised in heaven and is in the last resort a participation, here by grace and hereafter in glory, of the absolute unity of the life of the triune God. My own subject is the much more humble one of the visible unity of the

Church as a historical phenomenon. We may remind ourselves that there is a twofold unity in every individual human being: a unity of body and a unity of soul. The latter is more important than the former, as the soul is higher than the body. But the unity of the body is *necessary*; and it is in the visible unity of the body that our several members retain their connexion with our soul. Similarly, to anticipate what will be said later on, the Catholic position as regards the Church's unity is that visible unity of the Church as a historical entity is necessary, and that local churches as corporate parts of the whole retain their connexion with the life of the Church, a life deriving from the Holy Spirit, by remaining within that visible unity. Most Christians, as I have said, probably tend to agree that unity of some kind is a characteristic of God's Church. But Catholics add that unity is a characteristic *mark* of the Church, enabling the enquirer to identify her and to distinguish her from other bodies. They therefore affirm that unity is both inward and outward, both future and present. This affirmation is not made in any full sense by our separated brethren in those communions that owe their independent existence to the religious upheavals of the sixteenth century. Thus a recent Lambeth pronouncement clearly implied that the Church is something wider than the Anglican or any other single communion. The same assumption breathes, if I am not mistaken, through the pages of the report on Catholicity recently presented to the Archbishop of Canterbury by a committee of scholars and theologians mainly of the Anglo-Catholic persuasion. Thus for many of our Anglican brethren, and I think for a growing number of Christians in non-conformist bodies, visible unity is not indeed of the *esse* of the Church; but it is of its *bene esse*, an end to be hoped for, prayed for, striven for.

Nearly everyone would agree that in heaven the unity of the Church will be complete; a Kingdom of Wills, to use Kant's classic expression, a complete harmony of thought and love of which the glorified Christ will be the centre, the focus, the directive Head. And it is well to remind ourselves that the Kingdom of God, of which on earth the Church is the divinely established instrument, is essentially a post-historic reality. Our true home, says St Paul (Phil. 3, 20), is in heaven; it is to heaven that we look expectantly for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to save us. And our Lord himself points to his future coming in divine

majesty to judge mankind, when he will say to the saved: Enter into the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. The full manifestation of what we hope for is therefore reserved to the post-historic kingdom; and many non-Catholics would no doubt argue that the Catholic belief in visible unity as an essential property of the Church on earth is an illicit transference to the conditions of history of a consummation that is only guaranteed for the life to come.

But the expectation of a post-historic kingdom, though essential to Christianity, is not the differentia of our religion. Many Jews subscribed to this expectation before the coming of Christ. What distinguishes Christianity from Judaism is its faith that this post-historic kingdom has its real historical anticipation in the Incarnation and its effects. It is not the second coming of Christ which is the Christian novelty; it is his first coming. Not the advent on the clouds of heaven, not the throne of post-historic judgment, but the advent in the stable of Bethlehem and the throne of the Cross. This is the scandal and the folly of Christianity: the obscure and humiliated Messiah establishing a 'contemptible little' kingdom subject to the vicissitudes of history; a kingdom to be propagated by a Church that would be persecuted and betrayed, and that would suffer from apostasies, from the competition of false prophets and pseudo-Christes and from the cooling-off of the charity of its own members. Men had called the Master of the house Beelzebub; they would not be less ready to give the same title to his servants. Yet this his household, this Church as he calls it in the famous passage in St Matthew xvi, is the little flock to whom it is the Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom. We shall never understand Christianity unless we hold fast to the fact that it is a religion on two planes, a post-historic and a historical plane, and that the historical plane is a symbol containing 'sacramentally' the reality of the post-historic plane—is what we may call an eschatological sacrament.

What, then, is this Church which our Lord said he would establish, and which we see in existence before our eyes in the New Testament? It is, quite simply, a historical society; though it is also something more than an ordinary human society. It is a society whose members have accepted as true the Gospel proclaimed first by Christ, and after him by those who have received his commission. It is a society that is entered into by the reception

of baptism; and baptism is only accorded to those who make a confession of faith: He who *believes* and is baptised will be saved. It functions as a society. It has its officials, for example the apostles, who exercise authority in it and have the power, which they are prepared on occasion to exercise, to deprive a member of his active membership: My judgment is to hand over (the evil-doer) to Satan to the destruction of the flesh that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. Professor Dodd has recently argued that we have here the exercise of the power of ex-communication referred to in St Matthew xviii: Count him all one with the heathen and the publican; all that you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and all that you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. As a society, and under the leadership of the apostles, the Church legislates (Acts 15). It is conscious of itself as a society distinguishable from its non-Christian background: Give no offence, says St Paul, to Jew or to Greek, or to God's Church (1 Cor. 10, 32). And to this Church Christ promised indefectibility: built upon a rock (like the spiritual life of the individual disciple, Mt. 7) the gates of Hell would not prevail against it. We must infer that if this society should cease to exist on earth Christ's promises would be proved untrustworthy. This society takes the place in the new dispensation of the Jewish people in the old. Its rulers the apostles teach infallibly—such is the inference we may draw from Professor Cullman's study of tradition in the New Testament—and it is itself the pillar and the ground of truth, the Temple of God, God's building, the inheritor of the kingdom.

Two writers in the S.P.C.K. one-volume Commentary, Dr Sparrow Simpson and Bishop E. Graham, may be referred to here. The former tells us that the primitive Christian community at Jerusalem contained in germ three elements fundamental to the Catholic interpretation of Christianity: Dogma, Hierarchy and Sacrament. The original leaders of the Church did not derive their authority from the community but from Christ. In great and vital questions the decision did not rest with the local church but with the central and original society. And the decision is unthinkable without the apostles as directing and presiding. He tells us that when St Paul speaks of the Church as the Body of Christ he means not the local church but the world-wide Church, not an invisible entity but that Church in which God has set the apostles. According to St Paul, as rightly interpreted by this same scholar,

an individual is brought into relation with Christ through incorporation into the world-wide Church. The distinction between those that are within and those that are without the constitution of the Church is fundamental. The Church is the object of Christ's love. It is the corporate institution that is redeemed (this is the principle later summed up in the epigram: *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*).

Bishop Graham says that for the author of the Epistle to the Ephesians redemption implies membership in a corporate society of divine origin, the Church of Christ, a visible society which is also an organic unity, the organ of Christ's self-expression, the instrument whereby he works. Without the Church he would even be incomplete as the Incarnate Saviour of mankind. The report on Catholicity, referred to above, has a valuable chapter on this primitive Christian society and its unity.

We see this society, as in the New Testament, so in the patristic age. St Justin Martyr sees the Christians as forming an *ethnos*, a people, distinct from Jews and Gentiles. Before him St Ignatius of Antioch speaks of the Catholic—that is to say the universal as contrasted with the particular local—Church. Heretics leave the Church, or are expelled from it, but it survives these losses, substantially unchanged; it survives, as Christ promised that it should survive, with its traditions, its hierarchy, its doctrines and its laws. It is, we are told, the ark of salvation and the house of God; you cannot have God for your Father, says St Cyprian, unless you have the Church for your mother. And this Church is a recognizable historical entity and visibly one, one in fact as it is one in Christ's intention, the seamless robe that cannot be divided. Bodies more or less Christian split off from the Church and pursue for a time each a life of its own. But the central body continues, and continues to claim to be alone the Church founded by Christ. From this central body of patristic times all modern Christianity derives.

It seems to me of overwhelming importance to realise that the Church is a historical society and not a pious aspiration or an exclusively heavenly reality. It is as historical, as concrete, as the human nature of Christ was historical, a thing of flesh and blood. Among the earliest heresies was Docetism, which denied the full historical concreteness of Christ's human nature. It has been taken as the typical heresy; and indeed it strikes at the roots of the

Christian doctrine of salvation, which rests upon the conviction that God has really assumed humanity into himself in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, and through him, proportions being observed, in us. Docetism in effect denies the precise truth which differentiates Christianity from Judaism: that God has really visited and redeemed his people, that the post-historic kingdom is already mysteriously present through the mission of Christ and of those commissioned by him. The theory of a Church essentially invisible, a Church of the elect, a Church that is a pattern laid up in heaven of which the best earthly approximations are mere human and contingent copies—such a theory is the deutero-Docetism of our modern times. Such is not the Church of the New Testament, the ancient Creeds, and the first millennium of Christian history. Nor can such an impalpable society (a contradiction in terms!) perform the functions of a Church in the spiritual life of mankind or of individual men.

Man is essentially social, as after so many generations of exaggerated individualism we are beginning now to realise again—sometimes with a fresh exaggeration in the opposite direction. He needs society as the medium of his human life and personal development. He needs the checks and disciplines, as well as the opportunities and enlargements, afforded by society. In social life he finds not enslavement but emancipation. If you offer man, in whom this social need is innate, not society but the idea of society (even the Platonic idea of society) the hungry sheep look up but are not fed. This, which is true of our natural life, is true also in the supernatural order—for grace crowns nature. The *idea* of a Church may titillate man's mind, but it cannot satisfy his spirit. His spirit needs the 'beloved community' itself, the actual historical fact of the Catholic Church, its authority in faith and morals, its actual discipline, its forbidding as well as its attractive aspect—a reality more complete than he is himself, a reality by inherence in which his own selfhood is made more real, is stabilised and enhanced, because in the mystical body of Christ he finds Christ, the fullness of us all, the new humanity in which our old humanity is regenerated and transfigured. No society less than a Church which is *de jure* universal can fulfil this function for man's spirit; for any society less than that is an incorporation not of the whole but of some part of humanity; it is of necessity provincial. *Homo sum et nil humanum alienum a me puto*. The Catholic Church of the New

Testament is central, classical, because it extends its sway of right over all mankind and is intended to be the super-naturalising leaven of every aspect of human life—it is Catholic both extensively and intensively.

As I have said, the men of our contemporary world are waking up, as to man's social nature and needs, so also to the social character of the religion of Christ; they repeat with more sense of its importance the phrase in the Creed about the holy Catholic church. But many of them have yet, so it seems to us, to realise that there is a world of difference between the *idea* of a Church and the *fact* of the Church.

There is one other point in regard to the Church about which there would be a very general agreement among Western Christians nowadays. Few in the West would deny that the Church is not an organ or appendix of civil society or the state; deriving as it does from a higher source than civil society, it derives from that source its independence and sovereign status. It is what the philosophers call a perfect, but what I prefer to call a *complete*, society; which means that it is not hierarchically subordinated to any more inclusive or more authoritative human association. There is no appeal on earth from its decisions within its own field of mission; and Christ tells us that its decisions are ratified in heaven. Obviously, as a sovereign and independent society it must have its own constitution, organization and government, and this government must derive its authority from the Founder of the Christian religion.

Now I wish to emphasise what is the heart of the matter for us Catholics when we are thinking about the problem of the reunion of Christendom. Yet it is a point which to us is so obvious as to be almost incapable of proof by reasoning; it appears to us to be something that one just sees, and we find it hard to understand how others fail to see it. It is that the Church of Christ is one historical society, not many such. It may indeed, and does, have subordinate groupings within it, as the church of Birmingham, the church of Paris, the church of New York, the church of Chungkin or the Maronite church of Antioch. But none of these is or claims to be a complete society by itself; each is only a local realisation, as was the church of Corinth in the days of St Paul, of a universal reality. Each is a subordinate part of the whole Church, deriving its life from actual contemporary inherence in

the whole Church as a limb derives its life from inherence in the living body. Once, however, you posit a Christian communion that is detached from the universal whole, that has renounced the authority of the whole, that has determined either to live its own independent life or to subordinate itself to an authority other than that of the *Catholica*, then that dissident communion is plainly no longer a part of the real historical society from which it has seceded. And this fact, that it is no longer a part, is true however the blame is to be apportioned for the act of separation. That act may have been initiated from either side; either the parent or the seceding body may, in your judgment, be morally responsible for the rupture. The fact remains that after the break we are dealing not with one but with more than one society. And for a Christian it can therefore require no argument that one and one only of the resultant societies is the society established by Christ and commissioned to represent him on earth.

I know that a movement named after the University of Oxford, a movement of high chivalry and Christian graciousness, at one time sponsored—or many of its adherents sponsored—a theory which affirmed that the one Catholic Church lives on in three separate branches out of communion with each other, in no inclusive subordination to a common contemporary life and a common contemporary authority. But I think it is quite clear that such a theory is impossible. You might with equal plausibility maintain that the United States of America, having seceded from the English Crown in the eighteenth century—whether justifiably or not is not the point—nevertheless remain today one society, one state, with England. True, they share—or shared—a common racial origin, they have with this country a common cultural tradition, they inherited her legal system, social structure—what you will. But they are organised under an independent sovereignty; and from the moment that this independence was a fact England and the U.S.A. were no longer one political society but two. A national church which should secede from Catholic unity, rejecting the authority henceforward of the body from which it seceded, and managing its own affairs under the supreme governance, if so be, of the national sovereign, is obviously no longer the same society as the Roman Catholic Church.

What we see, then, as we look out with unprejudiced eyes, as of a Martian paying his first visit to earth, upon the contemporary

Christian world, is a number of Christian societies independent of each other, though some of them have formed federations among themselves. There is a useful distinction in political science between the *Bundstaat* and the *Staatsbund*, the federal state and the federation of states. The U.S.A. is a federal state, because the ultimate sovereignty over the whole Union resides in the central government. The United Nations are a *Staatsbund*, a federation of states, because none of the constituent members of this union has so far consented to surrender its independent sovereignty. The Roman Catholic communion is analogous to the U.S.A., inasmuch as its constituent local churches, while each possessing a measure of autonomy, recognize a sovereignty beyond themselves in Council and Pope, or in the Pope alone; but this communion differs from the U.S.A. in the mode of its origin, since it was not constituted originally by the coming together of a number of previously existing independent entities—though since its origin it has occasionally taken into its unity already existing Christian groups. But the Christian bodies as a whole form neither a *Bundstaat* nor a *Staatsbund*.

The Catholic position with regard to the unity of the Church is simple—which is not to say that it is not profound. I am speaking for the moment of unity, not of the reunion of Christendom. It is, that Christ founded a Church which was essentially a society; that he promised indefectibility to this society and that (quite apart from a particular text in St Matthew's Gospel) it is clear from the New Testament that the Christian revelation involves the indefectibility of the Church; and that in consequence unless one (one only) of the extant Christian societies is the society established by Christ, then the claim of Christianity to be a true revelation from God collapses. The matter is really as simple as that and we cannot see any answer to the Catholic position.

Perhaps it will be as well, at this point, to refer to what I conceive to be a common cause of confusion in this matter. It is stated, and truly, that baptism is the rite by which a man becomes a member of Christ's Church. It is then observed that many extant Christian societies are composed of baptized persons. And it is inferred that a society of those who have been made members of the Church must be itself, as a society, a part of the Church. But the error in this inference is surely palpable. If ten thousand English families sail away from England, settle in some sparsely

inhabited region of the non-British world, and establish a new sovereign authority which they henceforth obey, the fact that they were English families and that their members were English citizens does not make this new state a part of the state of England. If its citizens can be said to remain in any sense English citizens, it is not by virtue of their membership of the new state, but by reason of their former allegiance to the English Crown. Similarly, if the Catholic hierarchy of Chile renounced its allegiance to the authority of the Roman Catholic communion—*quod Deus avertat*—and set up shop on its own account, the resulting national church of Chile would plainly not be a part of the Roman Catholic society. Christ founded not simply a new *race* consisting of baptized persons, but a new society; and though baptism of its own nature makes a man a member of that society, he can frustrate this consequence of baptism by refusing to accept the implications of such membership. Yet this fact, that baptism makes a man, normally, a member of the Catholic Church has one most consoling consequence: it means that the Church regards all baptized persons as her own children and longs to see her family reunited in the one home—they are our separated brethren. . . .

What then is the Catholic attitude to the problem of the reunion of Christendom? It is, to put it shortly, that reunion must be sought on the basis, not of the Highest Common Factor of the several Christian communions, but on that of the Lowest Common Multiple. The principle of the H.C.F. is that the doctrine of the resultant single Christian body should consist of those doctrines already held by all the separated bodies. I need not pause to point out in detail that the result would be a somewhat jejune creed. The notion of reunion on this basis has been satirised by Ronald Knox (in his Anglican days) in *Reunion All Round* and I need hardly add anything more about it now. The principle of the L.C.M. is that a basis of reunion should be sought in a form of Christianity which includes all that is positive in the positions of the reuniting bodies. I say all that is positive; and I venture to suggest that some of the reformers' doctrines which expressed positive opinions irreconcilable with Catholic truth have ceased to command the actual belief of the adherents of the Protestant Reformation. For instance, does anybody today hold the opinion of justification by faith alone in such a way as to be irreconcilable with the doctrine on justification of the Council of Trent? (Cur-

iously enough, it is perhaps in the case of the churches most close to the Catholic position, those I mean of the separated East, that there would be the greatest difficulty in applying the L.C.M. principle—if it is true that these churches really hold that the so-called Orthodox communion is the one true church of Christ).

As a matter of historical fact, and apart from any judgment on the implications of that fact, the Roman Catholic communion is and has been since before the origin of any other extant Christian communion the central stream of Christian history. Of the extant Christian bodies, none can claim historical continuity with Christian origins except by derivation from that central stream. Suppose our Martian, not content with a survey of contemporary Christendom, were to hire a time-machine from H. G. Wells, set the engine in reverse and so travel back through the Christian centuries. What would he see, as he went backwards from 1950 towards the first century A.D.? He would see Christian reunion taking place before his eyes. He would see the non-Catholic Christian bodies being absorbed, one by one, into the Catholic centre. As he passed the year 1925, or thereabouts, he would notice that the Czech National Church slid back into unity with the Holy See. Reaching the year 1870 he would see the same thing happening to the Old Catholic communion. Then in the 18th century Wesleyanism would reunite with the Church of England, and in 1560 and again in the 1530's the Church of England itself would be reunited to the Catholic Church. The same would happen to continental Protestant and Reformed churches in the same 16th century, and in the 11th century the Eastern so-called orthodox separated churches would have the same experience. Finally in the 5th century the Monophysite and Nestorian communions would revert to Catholic unity, so that when our Martian reached about the year 430 A.D. I suppose that none of those separated societies which now stand outside the Catholic unity would remain—we all spring, as I have said before, from the Catholic Church of 30 to 430 A.D.

Yes, you may say, but what right have you to maintain that the Catholic Church of 430 is identical with the Catholic Church today? Well, in the first place, if Christianity is a true religion, the Catholic Church of 430 A.D. must be identical with *one or other* of the Christian bodies which surround us at the present time; and we ask with some confidence, which of these contemporary bodies

can make any plausible claim to this exclusive identity except the Catholic Church? There is only one Church which has been able to maintain, in the face of the ordinary judgment of mankind, the title 'Catholic'; it is true for Roman Catholics today, as it was for Roman Catholics in the days of St Cyril of Jerusalem, that the way to find their meeting-place in a strange town is to enquire 'not simply where the Lord's house is, but where is the *Catholic Church*'. Again, the Catholic Church today, like the Catholic Church of 430 A.D., is a body claiming Christ's authority to dispense the sacraments and to teach infallibly to all mankind the traditional faith, claiming too that, objectively speaking, it is the duty of all men to belong to her. Again, in the Catholic Church today as in the Church of the fourth and early fifth centuries, there is one local church and see, the Roman, that claims to be the organ and necessary centre of this obligatory unity. St Ambrose, before the end of the fourth century, speaks of Rome as the church whence the laws of unity derive. St Jerome, also before 400 A.D., writes to the Pope of that time: 'I address myself to the successor of the fisherman and to the disciple of the cross. Making none my leader save Christ I am united in communion to your beatitude, that is to the See of Peter; on that rock I know the Church to have been built. He who eats the Paschal Lamb outside this abode is profane. If a man is not in Noe's Ark he will be submerged by the flood'. It cannot be plausibly maintained, if the Church of Christ has survived at all, that it is to be identified with any other body than that in which the Roman See still makes the claims that are implied or affirmed in these quotations from Catholic doctors of the fourth century.

A scheme of Christian reunion that left out the Roman Catholic communion would hardly be regarded as other than a very imperfect realisation of the impulse to unity. But on what terms could reunion *include* that communion? I am not now speaking dogmatically as a Catholic, but soberly as a man of ordinary commonsense. And I ask, could the Roman Catholic communion meet the non-Catholic bodies halfway? If we are thinking of such things as a vernacular liturgy, a married clergy, a patriarchate of Canterbury—then I say, of course yes. But if we are referring to the sphere of defined doctrine, then we are faced with an obvious and insurmountable difficulty. The whole Catholic dogmatic system, including our belief in the Godhead and perfect manhood

of Christ, is based on what we believe to be a divine guarantee given to the Church's teaching: the Church is the pillar and the ground of truth. The whole structure of Catholic doctrine, and every component of it, is thus accepted for the same reason, namely that it is true with the truth of an utterance of God himself, and that it carries his guarantee. To ask the Catholic Church to retract any of its dogmas, even to ask it to admit that any such dogma is an open question, would be to suggest the suicide of Catholicism, not only as Catholic, but as Christian. The dogma of the Church's infallibility, which is implicit in every other Catholic dogma, makes it impossible for the Church to retrace her steps in this dogmatic sphere.

But this dogma of infallibility is itself linked up with the truth that the Roman Catholic communion is not just a part, but the whole of the teaching Church established by Christ. It is not, you see, simply that we *will* not compromise here; it is that we cannot. If we could yield an inch, the whole Catholic position with regard to defined doctrine would be destroyed at once. We saw the instinctive Catholic reaction to such a threat forty years ago, when Modernism made precisely this suggestion—that dogma was not final but contingent. The suggestion was violently and totally rejected; and indeed nothing resembling historical Christianity could survive the disappearance of dogma. The epoch-making controversy of the fourth century, with regard to the word *consubstantial*, can have no meaning, must have been a huge and disastrous mistake, unless Christianity is a dogmatic religion.

It may of course be asked what grounds there are for supposing that, if the Catholic Church cannot withdraw from its doctrinal positions, other Christian bodies should find it easier to change their formularies. But it will at once be perceived that a society that makes no claim to infallibility is in a very different situation, in this matter, from one which does. If a society has said in the past that the Catholic doctrine of sacrifices of masses is a dangerous deceit, but has never claimed to be infallible in making such an assertion—then it can withdraw the proposition on the principle of an appeal from Philip excited to Philip calm.

It therefore appears to us that, desirable as reunion is, it could only come about not by the jettisoning of Catholic doctrine, but by a movement of approach to that doctrine on the part of the non-Catholic communions or their members. Meanwhile, and

at all times, the Catholic Church persists in its affirmation that, objectively speaking, every man is called to share in Christ's redemption by personal submission to the 'Catholic claims'.

We have always to remember that God foresaw what has been the actual outcome of the mission of Jesus Christ. The actual outcome has been the Church. Apart from some rather vague references in Jewish and pagan literature, all that we know of Christ and his teaching, all that he has meant and means to men, including the New Testament itself, is derived from the Church. The separated Christian bodies themselves can claim no tradition except what is derived from this source. We see, looking backwards as God saw looking forwards, not only that this was to be so; but we see, as he saw, how the Church was to develop—its features, its structure, as it declared itself ever more clearly in history; a society that was to be persistently, incurably doctrinal, sacramental, hierarchical, authoritarian, infallibilist. At no point, so far as we can see, were these features introduced by a revolutionary change of direction, but always in the process whereby the Church has been becoming ever more characteristically and manifestly what she always had it in her to become.

The question which we submit with all humility and in all charity to our non-Catholic friends is this: This development, the central and typical outcome of Christ's historical mission, this society from which all other Christian societies and movements in the long run derive—has it been willed by God, or has it only been permitted by him as error and sin are permitted? For ourselves, we have answered that question. We could not have known Christ apart from the Church. We see in the Church that sublime purity of moral ideal and of spiritual teaching, that transcendent claim, that power for good in the measure in which her teaching is accepted and obeyed, that miraculous victory in apparent failure, which she has taught us to venerate in Christ himself. And by faith we see yet more. We see in her the ever new, ever contemporary, yet ever traditional re-presentation of Christ himself, who was dead and behold he is alive for evermore, yesterday and today, and the same for ever. And then, looking back, we see that Christ, who is God, intended to establish a Church, establish it unshakably upon a rock. Are we to be blamed for holding that the Church with which history presents us, the Church which still speaks to us as she spoke to Origen and Augustine and Bernard,

to Dominic and Francis, to Thomas of Aquinum and Francis of Sales, to Thomas More and to Newman, is the fulfilment of that promise—since other fulfilment there is none? For us, then, the question can have but a single answer. And seeing in that answer the key to the problems, the supply of the spiritual needs of mankind, we long to transmit the vision of it to our separated brethren and to a whole world which can come, in the final issue, to God only through Christ, and can come to Christ, in the final issue, only through the Church.

I will conclude by emphasizing that in all this, if I seem to sit in judgment on non-Catholic forms of Christianity, I wish to pass no sort of moral judgment on non-Catholic Christians. It is no part of my task to apportion guilt to the originators of heresies and schisms. As regards those who have grown up in such separated bodies after they had long been in existence, I am confident, and indeed bound in charity to believe, that the vast majority of those among them who practise their religion are, as we say, 'in good faith'. Being in good faith, so long as they remain in good faith, they are capable of divine grace and I do not doubt that they receive it. God's mercy is unbounded; and if I understand our Lord's teaching aright, there may well be excuse for failure to recognize explicitly either God in Jesus of Nazareth or Christ in his Church. But there could be no excuse for a Catholic who deliberately 'spoke a word against' what his conscience tells him is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Nor on the other hand will that man attain salvation who has in his conscience recognized the divine authority in the Church so long as he pertinaciously (to use a technical term of the canonists) refuses her his visible allegiance.