

# HOW TO LOOK FOR THE TRUE CHURCH

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It is an exceedingly difficult, nay, an impossible thing to form an accurate estimate of the duration of that life which awaits us beyond the grave. We often speak indeed of an eternity of joy or of pain; of an eternity in heaven or in hell. But what is eternity? Who can measure it? Who can conceive it? What image can we draw of it? What figures will serve to express it? The more we think of it the more the difficulty grows; the more strenuous the efforts we make to grasp it, the more completely it escapes from our view, the more completely it eludes us. We have no means of taking the soundings of that unfathomable sea, or of measuring its limitless length. We may exhaust all numbers; we may call to our aid every symbol and figure, but we can approach no step nearer to the solution of the difficulty than when we started. For it is impossible to measure the measureless, or to fathom the unfathomable. Not merely historic time, but all cosmic and astronomic time is swallowed up in it. The process of star-building; the formation of suns and planets; the gradual unfolding of new constellations and systems, occupying hundreds of millions of years, and æons of ages; are but as tiny drops in the bottomless ocean of eternity.

Yet our eternity depends wholly and entirely upon the present moment—upon the passing hour—which we call life. What each individual shall be; whether happy or miserable throughout the limitless durations of the future, must be determined practically by himself, and by no other. Heaven and hell are quivering in the balance. "Life and death are before him, that which he chooses,

he shall have." Now, can we conceive anything more important, or of greater concern and interest, than to secure eternal happiness; and to secure it at any price? Is there any possible subject that so presses for a practical and immediate solution as the question—"Am I on the right path?" "Does the road I am following lead to eternal life, or is it conducting me to everlasting death?"

That multitudes miss their way and are lost irrecoverably, is not only probable, but is absolutely certain, for "many are called but few are chosen." And the same appalling fate may overtake any one of us, should we grow careless or indifferent.

The importance of following the right path is so great that Christ did not hesitate to come down upon earth, in human form, to point it out Himself. He made known the way. In the plenitude of His divine power He laid down the conditions, and stated precisely *on what terms* we were to receive the promise of eternal happiness with Himself.

He established a Church, a living organism, which was to remain for ever and to teach us all necessary truths. Observe, I say to *teach*, not to discuss, not to dispute, not to argue, but to teach; to teach dogmatically, authoritatively; by His express command, and in His name; "Who heareth you, heareth Me." In fact, in view of the absolute importance of the subject, He determined to teach us Himself, if not always directly and with His own lips, at least in and through His Church, as through a divinely constituted channel; remaining with her always for that specific purpose. "Behold I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world."

This Church was commanded to teach the truths He had enunciated and laid down, just these and no others. She was ordered to teach all nations, and all persons were made *de jure* her subjects; and everyone so addressed was bound to listen, to accept, and to obey. "Go and teach all nations, and whosoever believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; and"—note well the words that follow—"whosoever believeth not shall be condemned."

Eternal life, then, is here made dependent upon believing what is taught—believing Christ's message, and, of course, putting it into practice. But now comes the crucial point. What is Christ's message, and who is Christ's messenger? Who is he that holds the divine commis-

sion? It will never do to accept the first person that chances to present himself. It will not save us to listen to Wesley, or to the Archbishop of Canterbury, or to General Booth, or to any man however great and good, unless he be in very truth the duly appointed and properly accredited messenger of God, and is really teaching all that Christ taught, and nothing that He did not teach.

And mark, on the due acceptance of the message our very salvation depends. Again, therefore, we ask: Who is Christ's messenger? Which of the many claimants, ancient and modern, old and young, is the true one? It is undoubtedly a matter of supreme importance to determine which of the many claimants is the one who has been entrusted with so solemn and so tremendous a responsibility.

Is this difficult? I must make a distinction. It is perfectly easy if only we will start by removing the obstacles; but it is impossible if we deliberately allow these obstacles to remain and blind our mental vision.

My purpose in this paper is to point out some of the chief obstacles; and to clear the ground, as it were, in preparation for a more complete and fundamental examination.

(A) One of the chief obstacles to a fair and impartial examination arises from prejudice and bias. Men set out on their journey of enquiry with minds full of suspicion, mistrust, and dislike. They have, from their earliest infancy, breathed an atmosphere of hostility to the Catholic Church. She has been the bogey and the *bête noire* of their whole lives. The whole current of opinion in which they move is antagonistic to the Church of Rome. Few can realize the influence of education, and the incalculable power over the mind of hostile opinions, imbibed from infancy through every pore and never contradicted. Consider the English language in which a man learns both to think and to express his thoughts. "For three hundred years and more that tongue has been one vast engine of ceaseless attack upon the Catholic Church: its literature is saturated with a spirit of the most deadly antagonism to that Church, not in the department of theology only, but in the departments of history, and poetry, and travels, and fiction—aye, and the very primers in the hands of the little children. If such be the character of the fountain, what effect may not be

anticipated in those who all their lives long drink of its poisonous streams?" This is the question asked by James Stone, himself a convert from Protestantism, in his book *The Invitation Heeded* (p. 25).

It has been said that love is blind: whether this be so or not, it is quite certain that hate is blind. The hatred and preconceived suspicions of the Jews so blinded their judgement that they could not see the holiness and truthfulness even of Christ. And if men failed to recognize the conspicuous virtues even of God Incarnate, and persecuted Him to the end; can we wonder if they fail in the same way to see the beauty and sanctity and truth of the Bride of Christ, the Church? Hatred and malevolence and dislike blind and deceive us; and, unless we are careful, will deceive us to the end, to our irreparable loss! We must begin by laying aside prejudice and hate.

(B) Another difficulty arises from the fact that many Protestants not only fail to realize the beauty of the Catholic Church, but they have never had it set before them. What they have contemplated all their lives long is not the Church, but mere caricatures designed by its enemies. They look at it not in itself, but through the eyes of its bitterest foes and opponents—hence, through a distorted medium.

You may have noticed the twisted mirrors sometimes hung up and exhibited in fairs and places of amusement. It is quite true that they do indeed reflect the person standing before them—after a fashion. But the image is distorted, misshapen, hideous, disproportioned. The most exquisite of all beauties would be represented as utterly repulsive by such mirrors. The beauty of the Catholic Church suffers a similar treatment at the hands of unscrupulous men. They do not afford an inquirer a fair opportunity of judging, since what they present and label "the Catholic Church" is not the Church at all, but a hideous and revolting caricature of it. For instance, to take somewhat extreme cases. They would persuade men that Catholics pay for the forgiveness of their sins; that they show greater honour to the Blessed Virgin than to Christ; that they call the Pope, God. In these and hundreds of other ways they distort her fair proportions, and strive, often but too successfully, to belittle her in the eyes of those who, did they but see her as she is, would at once place themselves under instruction.

We have a good and up-to-date example in an article written by Miss Lilian C. Morant in the *Nineteenth Century* (December, 1900, p. 824). A more ridiculous travesty of truth it would be hard to discover. We expect vulgar abuse in such papers as *The Rock*, etc.; but that a magazine with the reputation of the *Nineteenth Century* should lend itself to such methods is, indeed, more than we should have expected.

Miss Morant calmly writes that Leo XIII. "has bestowed upon Josef Mayer a pardon, not only for all his own sins, past and present and future, but also, with a truly lavish generosity, for those of all his children." Having elaborated this extraordinary scarecrow from the recesses of her own fertile imagination, she then, of course, proceeds to expatiate on the awful consequences of "being nourished at the bosom of the Roman Church." That is to say, she bedaubs the fair face of the Bride of Christ with dirt and filth, clothes her in repulsive garments of her own manufacture, and then turns round and invites the world to spurn and despise so pitiable an object. Had she been less in a hurry to belittle and to damage the Church, she might have sought instruction of the first Catholic schoolboy and been saved from such folly. So much for her statement. Every schoolboy knows the Pope has no more power to forgive sin, outside of the Sacrament of Penance, than anyone reading this tract. Every child that learns its catechism is aware that neither the Pope nor any other Bishop or Priest can exercise any absolving power over sins not yet committed. Miss Morant is, in reality, referring to a well-recognized form of indulgence. Now an indulgence has nothing whatever to do with sin itself, it does not touch sin properly so called; sin is not even the subject-matter of an indulgence. An indulgence cannot begin to operate at all *until the guilt of sin has ceased to exist—i.e.*, until it has been removed. It affects only the penalty of sin, the punishment due to sin; and even then it remains wholly inoperative until the sin itself has been forgiven. Misrepresentations such as this are difficulties and obstacles.

(c) Other obstacles arise from the sense of fear. Some pusillanimous men are restrained and held back from making a free and earnest inquiry lest they should be convinced of the truth of Catholicity, and obliged to acknowledge that it is the Church of God. Why afraid? Because Protestantism is so much easier, and demands so

much less from them. As Protestants, men enjoy more liberty, more independence.

To enter into the Catholic Church is, no doubt, as converts find out, to enter into the narrow way. There are fasts and abstinences—not marked idly in the prayer-book, but to be really observed—and there is confession;—self-accusation, not to God only, but to His representative also, to a fellow-man. And then there is the strict obligation to hear mass on Sundays and on certain week-days also. The “broad way” of greater freedom and less restraint is so much more comfortable! That may be quite true; the drawback is, that the broad way leads to destruction, and the narrow way to eternal life. “Strive,” says Christ, “to enter by the narrow gate.”

(D) Then there are fears and anxieties of another kind that also stop people. They ask: “What will the world say; what will all my friends think and do? If I become a Catholic, it will alienate my nearest and dearest.” To these difficulties may be added personal loss—the losing of a lucrative position; the giving up of a valuable post; the facing comparative poverty. It is not everyone who has the courage and magnanimity to sell all, and to be stript of all, so as to secure even the pearl of great price—the Truth revealed by Christ. I remember how a certain lady of high rank having been received into the Church, her friends came to her and said that she really ought not to allow her daughter to become a Catholic—and why? Because it would interfere with and blight her matrimonial chances. They put the temporal before the eternal.

That the Catholic Church is the True Church established by Christ is a statement which rests upon the most certain and positive grounds. But my purpose now is to deal simply with the probabilities of the question; to point out certain undeniable facts of history, and to ask what impression these facts are calculated to produce on any honest, dispassionate, and open mind.

(A) The first question it occurs to me to ask is: Is it likely that a Church, such as the Catholic Church, which can trace its origin back, century after century, through a long line of Popes, from Leo and Pius IX. to Peter and Christ Himself, should be wrong—and that the Church of England, or any other Protestant Church, which had no existence till the sixteenth century, should be right.

Is it probable that the Church which was contemporary with Christ; which was one with the Apostles; which was, so to speak, nearest to the source and fountain of all inspiration, should be wrong and mistaken and in error; and that Churches separated from this source by over fifteen hundred years should possess the truth? Or, to put it in another form—Are Churches which started into life a thousand and more years after the time of Christ, more likely to be the Churches of Christ than the Church which has come down in unbroken succession from Him?

(B) Take England itself. Again we ask: Which is more likely to be the true religion—that religion which was brought into England by missionaries from Rome, sent directly by Pope Gregory himself, a religion which gradually penetrated throughout the whole country, and won the hearts of the whole English people; that religion which was openly professed and acknowledged for over a thousand years; that religion which laid the foundations of her greatness, which established her glorious constitution, her form of government, that founded her most famous universities, and built up her most magnificent cathedrals and abbeys? Is that more probably the true religion of Christ, or the religion introduced in the sixteenth century—the Anglican religion that has existed but a paltry three or four hundred years, and which has broken up and divided into hundreds of different sects; which is not united even within its own narrow borders? Whoever heard of High or Low, or Broad or Narrow, as applied to the Church before the sixteenth century?

(c) It would likewise seem to the ordinary intelligent inquirer that the faith which was professed by the whole of Christian Europe for over a thousand years must have been the true faith, as it was then the only form of Christianity. There was then no other. Or shall we adopt the somewhat blasphemous opinion that, though right at first, it afterwards went wrong; erred from the right path? But this cuts the ground from under our feet; for on such an hypothesis what becomes of the promise of Christ? Are we to believe that He cannot keep His word? "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall never pass away." He promises that the gates of hell, *i.e.*, of error, shall never prevail; that He will abide with His Church Himself for ever; that His Holy Spirit will guard it from all error, and bring to mind all He had taught. Is it likely, nay, is it

conceivable, that His promises should all be thus broken and shattered, and that His Church should have so fallen and corrupted and sunk into error, that the services of Henry VIII. and Martin Luther, and others of a like character, were required to drag her out of the mire, to cleanse and purify her, and "wash her face"? This is what Protestants affirm. Listen to these words from the Homilies of the Church of England. The Homily states that "not only the unlearned and simple, but the learned and wise; not the people only, but the bishops; not the sheep, but the shepherds themselves . . . fell into the pit of damnable idolatry, in the which all the world, as it were drowned, continued until our age [*i.e.*, the Reformation] by the space of about eight hundred years." To say so is to deny our Lord's own words, and sounds very much like blasphemy.

(D) We may further put it to the impartial inquirer: Does the life and character and moral worth of the Reformers, of those who first introduced Protestantism, render it probable that they were come to purify the Church—they, whose mere touch was defilement? Catholicism was introduced into England by modest, humble, peaceful monks, bereft of all worldly power and physical force—men whose lives were austere, and who practised self-denial, poverty, obedience, chastity, etc., and won men by the beauty and sanctity of their whole character.

But who introduced Protestantism? What were the so-called Reformers like? Consider Henry VIII. who first caused the breach with Rome. What was the source of the quarrel? What caused the breach? Just this: that being a duly married man, he wished to repudiate his own wife, and marry another younger and more attractive woman. The plain facts of history are these: *the English King wanted to break the law of God, and the Pope wanted him to keep it.* That was the little spark whence came the great fire.

William Cobbett, Protestant writer, speaking of his death, refers to Henry VIII. in these words: "Thus expired, in 1547, the most unjust, hard-hearted, meanest, and most sanguinary tyrant that the world had ever beheld, whether Christian or heathen." Is it probable that the Church of which he was the first supreme ruler, and, indeed, the founder and father, is the Church of Christ?

(E) Again, had the Reformers nothing to gain? Were



they actuated by pure zeal, the glory of God, and other disinterested motives?

They included men who had broken their vows, thrown up their most sacred obligations, and who were unprincipled, immoral, proud, contentious, cruel, and unjust.

The thirst for gold and treasure set them on. The altars, shrines, tombs, chapels, churches, monasteries, and cathedrals were stripped to fill their pockets. The silver and gold plate, the precious vases, the jewels and precious stones, all were swallowed by these ravening wolves. Even Henry VIII. himself was at last disgusted at the rapacity of his followers who sought their share of the spoils of the desecrated altars, shrines, and monasteries. When complaining to Cromwell he burst out into anger, exclaiming: "By Our Lady! the cormorants, when they have got the garbage, will they devour the dish?" In this way they sought to wash the face of the Church in England.

(F) Further; the mode in which they sought to impose their novel doctrines is in keeping with the rest. They were not satisfied with teaching, expounding, arguing, exhorting. They knew they could never turn white into black by mere talking. Nor were they satisfied to confine themselves to the writing of tracts and treatises, and attacks and lampoons, though there were plenty of those too. Their arguments were of altogether another kind. They argued with the Church in this country exactly as the Jews argued with the glorious St. Stephen, the deacon, in the first dawn of Christianity. When they could not answer him, they took up stones and stoned him to death. Similarly the Reformers, knowing the position of the Catholic Church to be unassailable, they made use of physical force. Their arguments were fire and sword, fines, dungeons, and the hangman's rope; disembowelings and quarterings, and other refinements of diabolical cruelty and injustice, that make one's blood run cold even to read of—and this by a Church professing liberty of conscience, and the right of each to exercise his private judgement. Which is more likely to be the true Church—a Church introduced by holy, mortified men inured to hardship and to penance by their rule, and following the manner of Christ; or a Church forced upon men under a threat of an agonizing death by the greatest set of rascals that ever lived?

It is no answer to say that Catholic governments have also at times forgotten the suavity of their Divine Founder,

and inflicted physical pain and death. For I am comparing the manner in which Catholicity and Protestantism have been respectively *introduced*, and the methods by which they respectively took possession of the English nation. Yes; compare the *founder* of Protestantism with the *Founder* of Catholicism, and then judge.

Let us now turn to the Holy Scriptures.

Which is most likely to be the true Church,—the Church that has ever watched over, preserved, and safeguarded the Bible, and that has defined and declared exactly of what books and what writings it consists—that is to say, the Catholic Church—or the Church which has been obliged to apply for it and to receive it from the hands of the Catholic Church?

Neither the Anglican nor any other Protestant Church would have it at all, had it not been copied, and guarded, and treasured up, and carefully handed down during many hundred years till they came into existence. Is the Protestant system of treating it, or the Catholic more likely to be the right one? The Catholic Church says, "That is my book; I understand it; I know its meaning; I am its divinely-appointed interpreter. Read it, study it; but if your interpretation does not harmonize with mine, know that you are wrong, you have misunderstood." Such an attitude is quite consonant with a Church which has been told to "Go and teach," and which men have been ordered to hear. But the principle of private judgement does away with the very need of a Church, and uses the Bible *against* the Church. The Protestant system is to leave each man to read and interpret for himself. He is not taught by any authority. He is his own master. He finds what meaning be fancies, or what his ignorance may suggest, and there is no "hearing the Church." There is hearing only his own fallible reason. What is the consequence? The authority of the Scriptures is belittled, scouted, and openly denied; for hundreds of irreconcilable sects all prove from Scripture (to their own satisfaction, at least) their own particular and pet doctrines, which causes many of the more thoughtful to reject the Bible altogether. Which of these two systems of treating the Bible is the more reasonable, the more respectful to God's written word, and which is probably the true one?

Again: which Church is most guided and influenced by

the Scriptures? Where are its enactments most fully carried out? We ask, because the Church which more nearly obeys and listens to the Scriptures, is more likely to be the Church of Christ than any other. We will select a few instances:—

Take the words: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." These words, pronounced by our Lord Himself, clearly indicate both the power of absolving from sin, and also the power of withholding forgiveness. Where is this power so fully acknowledged, and accepted and applied as in the Catholic Church? Again, take the following passage from the prophecy of the Prophet Malachias: "From the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles (to the Jews all who were not of their own race were 'Gentiles'), and in *every place* there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation; for my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of Hosts" (i. 11). What is this "clean oblation"? It is the precious Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharistic sacrifice,—it is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. What is there in the Protestant Church that can be taken as the fulfilment of this prophecy? What is the "sacrifice" and the "clean oblation" offered by Protestantism to the name of God from the rising of the sun to the going down? In the Catholic Church the accomplishment of the prophecy is clear, patent, manifest; but how can the words be made to fit the case of those with whom the mass is a "blasphemous fable"?

A similar argument may be based upon a number of other texts. In the fifth chapter of his Epistle, the Apostle St. James clearly describes the sacrament of Extreme Unction. "Is any man sick amongst you? Let him bring in the priests of the Church and let them (a) pray over him, (b) anointing him with oil (c) in the name of the Lord." Now, what are the effects? So far, we have the outward signs; but what are the inward graces? The Apostle tells us: "And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man; and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he be in sins they shall be forgiven him" (v. 14, 15). It is a ceremony to which is attached certain inward graces—"his sins shall be forgiven."

Who possesses this Sacrament at the present day? Who is there that enters into the room of the dying and regularly and systematically "anoints with oil" those who are in danger of death? Is it the Protestant Church? No! It

is the old Catholic and Apostolic Church which is still the greatest and grandest power in the world. The Anglican Church acknowledges but two sacraments out of the seven. She attaches no importance to Extreme Unction. It is the Catholic Church which has her special ritual for this Sacrament, and which insists on it being always administered in case of grave illness; and which orders her ministers, even with considerable danger to themselves, through contagion, to give it to the dying: and which pays real attention to the inspired words of the Apostle. Put the question to any Protestant Church. Ask if Extreme Unction is a true "Sacrament" with them; and you will find it is not.

Take another text of a somewhat different kind. Our Lord commanded His disciples—in a word, His Church—to go and teach, or, as the original has it, to "make disciples of all nations." "Go and teach all nations." What Church most truly carries out this command? Who has been teaching the world from the beginning? What Church was it that converted and "made disciples" of England itself and won her from Paganism? What Church converted Ireland, Scotland, France, Italy, Germany, Belgium, Norway, Sweden, Spain and Portugal? Was it our neighbour the Anglican Church? Was it any one of the Protestant Churches? It was no other than the Catholic Church. If a Protestant race or nation or country exist to-day, it is one converted originally from Paganism to *Catholicity*; it is one that was, in the first instance, converted by Catholic missionaries, but which afterwards sunk and settled down to the lower and more human level of comfortable Protestantism; and has thrown off the more difficult practices of religion, such as confession, fasting, submission to an infallible authority, and so forth. The question may well be put: Has the Protestant Church, whether Anglican, Lutheran, or any other, carried out the command to teach all nations? If not, it is simply *not* the Church addressed by Christ. Has it since its first rise in the sixteenth century, converted so much as one country or one nation from Paganism to Protestantism? If it has not, then how can it be the Church of Christ; for the Church is especially charged with this duty, and entrusted with this office? On the other hand, if it has converted even so much as one nation from infidelity, I should very much like to know which it is.

I wish now to call attention to another fact which seems to point to the Catholic Church being the true one—and that regards, firstly, the kind of persons who are attracted towards the Church, and, secondly, the kind of persons who find themselves much better out of it. We notice that a large number of persons are seized with admiration for the old Faith; that thousands put themselves under instruction every year, even in England alone. On the other hand, there are some,—exceedingly few, I am glad to say, still there are some we hear of from time to time, who leave the fold of the Catholic Church to become Anglicans, Unitarians, Agnostics, and what not.

Now what do we notice when comparing the one set of persons with the other? The Protestant who becomes a Catholic, as almost an universal rule, has nothing whatever to gain by it, from a temporal point of view. On the contrary, he generally has a great deal to suffer. He has to withstand the full current of popular opinion, which is set dead against the Church in this country. He has to act with the full knowledge that he will wound and offend and alienate his best friends, who will look daggers at him, treat him with coldness, and often throw him off altogether, as though he were a spiritual leper. Frequently his own family practically disown him, and treat him with the greatest harshness and cruelty. Husbands will thrust their wives, and fathers their daughters out of doors, for daring to exercise their private judgement, when that judgement leads them to what they call Popery.

In the case of clergymen, it happens again and again, that to become a Catholic means to lose not only their best friends, and the love and admiration of their congregations, but it means to throw up a fat living, and to face poverty, want, and the loss of all the comforts and elegancies of life. They are either married or not married, but in both cases they suffer. If married, they are generally obliged to take to some secular profession, for which neither their training nor their inclination has, in the least degree, fitted them; and to see their wives and children come down in the world, and perhaps forced to take situations as governesses, or even to go into service. If, on the other hand, they be unmarried, and wish to enter the Catholic ministry, then they have practically to go to school again, to humble themselves and begin their course of philosophy and theology anew; to unlearn a great deal

they once learned, and perhaps to sit among young students half their age, and with half their knowledge and experience. In fact, so great and so many are the difficulties and the hardships they have to contend with, that no one can well doubt their sincerity, their purity of intention, and the disinterestedness of their motives.

It is far indeed from being the refuse and the scum of Protestantism that drift, like flotsam and jetsam, into the Catholic Church. Quite the opposite. It is the nobler, better, and more generously minded, who are ready to sell all they possess in order to purchase the pearl of great price, the Divine Truth as taught by Christ. Their mental as well as their moral qualities are not unfrequently made manifest by the position to which many of their number attain within the Catholic Church. We might instance such persons as Cardinal Manning, Cardinal Newman, and many more, whose noble lives and self-sacrificing conduct sufficiently betoken the stuff of which they were made.

Contrast these with such as leave the Catholic Church, to become members of the Anglican, or other sects. These have everything to gain from a worldly point of view. Consider a Catholic priest who joins a Protestant community. We know cases, in which he has left the Church because his drunken and dissolute life was rendering his position intolerable, and because suspension, disgrace, and serious ecclesiastical penalties were actually hanging over his head, and seemed imminent. Or he found the restraints of his office grow irksome; the long hours in the confessional; the tiresome sick calls at night; the inevitable daily reading of the divine office; the restrictions of Lent and Advent; the prohibitions regarding theatres, operas, balls, and other amusements, and a thousand other curtailments of liberty, all became tiresome, annoying, and distressing. True. Now, by becoming a Protestant all these restraints would be removed.

Besides, as a priest he is bound to the celibate life. When a man loses his fervour, and grows cold in the service of God, and thinks of self rather than others, he begins to crave for a wife. Priests of the Catholic Church cannot enter into the marriage state. They are not allowed even to aspire to the ecclesiastical career, unless they are willing to bind themselves by vow to live a celibate life. But the Protestant Church opens out its arms to them;

promises them full freedom to marry whomsoever they like. Thus it happens that here or there a poor, worldly-minded, comfort-seeking, cowardly, weak, and sensuous priest yields to the attraction, apostatizes and goes through the form of marriage. This is so well known, so universally recognized in the Church, that it is always expected as the next step after apostasy; and the expectation is very rarely falsified, though naturally marriage is not the excuse alleged. I might give examples of what I have said, but I forbear. It is enough to ask men to consider for themselves the kind of persons whom the Catholic Church receives into her bosom, and the kind of persons who go out from her. It will convey a very salutary lesson.

Now we will pass to another class of persons, whose judgement, it seems, may very safely be relied upon, and accepted. I mean the sick and the dying. When a man becomes fully conscious that death is at hand; when he realizes that the world is receding, and that the end is near; whatever else he may be, he is generally sincere. The influences of the world, the favour or disfavour of men, are not considerations that weigh upon him. The purely temporal advantages or disadvantages of one line of conduct over another lose all their power to sway his judgement. He already sees, in imagination, the judgement seat of God, and the Judge who will judge him with perfect impartiality: a Judge who is inflexible and omniscient, and who will pass sentence upon every man according to his works. He knows that in a few days, perhaps a few hours, he will be in eternity, and face to face with One who can neither deceive nor be deceived. If ever in his life a man is sincere, honest, and anxious to do what he considers to be to his own safety and advantage, it is then. He is fully aware that heaven or hell must be his eternal portion, and that much depends—I may say that everything depends—upon his dispositions, and upon the sincerity of his desire to satisfy and please God. Consequently, what a man will do under those circumstances will probably be wisely and sincerely done. Now what do we find? Well; we find scores and scores of non-Catholics asking to be received into the Catholic Church in times of sickness, disease, epidemic, and danger, and above all on their deathbeds. Again and again do we hear of people calling and begging for a Catholic priest to baptize them, and hear their confession, and administer the last rites

Who, on the other hand, ever heard of a practising Catholic, or indeed of any kind of Catholic, asking to be received into the Protestant Church on his deathbed? I have never once heard, or seen, or read of such a thing. Nor can I conceive it as possible. I believe such an experience is wholly unknown and unrecorded. No instance, so far as I can discover, has ever even been alleged. Is there, I wonder, so much as one authenticated case on record?

To me this is, I will not say a proof, for I am not now dealing with proofs, but a most striking sign and symptom of the truth of the Catholic religion. It speaks volumes to anyone who can look upon the matter dispassionately. How can it be explained? I know not any explanation but one, and it is that the Catholic faith is the true one. When does a man judge best? When are his convictions most reliable? Surely it is when two conditions are realized—viz., when he is (firstly) most intensely and acutely in earnest; and (secondly) when he is acting under supernatural and spiritual motives only—untouched by any worldly, earthly, and mundane considerations. When is this? It is, above all, when he lies at the point of death.

I will end by quoting the testimony of Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes on the peace and confidence of Catholic deaths. This doctor, who was a member of the Emersonian school of Transcendentalists, writes: "I have seen a good many Roman Catholics on their deathbeds, and it has always appeared to me that they accepted the inevitable with a composure which showed that their belief, whether or not the best to live by, was a better one to die by than most of the creeds which have replaced it" (*Over the Teacups*, pp. 250, ed. 1894).