

WHY NOT BE A TRUE BIBLE CHRISTIAN?

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PREFACE.

WHY was it that we, who were brought up, as so many earnest Protestants were, to read the Holy Scriptures constantly, and to commit large portions to memory, never were taught to make a study of the passages in which Our Lord instructed us in regard to the basic authority, which He was about to establish to rule and govern His Church, and which was to be seen working under the guidance of the Holy Ghost immediately after Pentecost in the Acts of the Apostles, and in the subsequent history of Christianity?

I am convinced that my own experience was that of almost all other Protestants.

All these questions were ignored. It was assumed that the ecclesiastical status of the various Protestant sects (Anglicans, Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, et cetera) was in general concordance with the Divine Plan.

Any differences were of no vital importance — mere questions of “Church government” or “nonessential”; at any rate, not sufficient to prevent free intercommunion.

When, however, in later years, the necessity of making a careful examination of these vital questions was forced upon me, nothing surprised me more than to find that, for the above reason, much of the New Testament had remained a closed book to me; and I believe that this is true of millions of other Christians like myself who, in all good faith, accepted the Holy Scriptures as having true, plenary inspiration from Almighty God, and (as Leo XIII puts it in his Encyclical on Holy Scripture) “Have God for their Author.”

My object, therefore, in writing, is to ask those who were brought up as I was, and have not had their belief eaten away by Rationalism and Modernism, to examine with me some of the passages in Holy Scripture which bear upon this subject of supreme importance to all faithful followers of Christ, and then to consider what conclusions must result from this; in other words to accept the whole Bible, and thereafter to be true “Bible Christians.”

It is necessary, in order to illustrate the working out of the Divine Plan in the Christian Church, to show how this teaching authority was recognized by Christians of all parts of the civilized world in the early centuries of the Church’s life, thus indicating the Continuity of Principle which has existed from the Day of Pentecost; but surely it can only be a cause of joy to all true followers of Jesus Christ to see, as the ages pass by, the gradual unfolding of this Plan, and to watch the Holy Spirit, according to His promise, guiding His Church “into all truth” (Saint John 16:13).

The quotations from Holy Scripture are made throughout from the “King James” version as being probably more familiar to the reader. Where the Douay Version is used once, it is so indicated.

REFERENCES.

A. = *A City Set on a Hill* — Monsignor Robert Hugh Benson.

B. = *The See of Saint Peter* — T. W. Allies, K.C.S.G.

C. = *The First Eight General Councils and Papal Infallibility* — Dom John Chapman, O.S.B.

D. = *The Condemnation of Pope Honorius* — Dom John Chapman, O.S.B.

E. = *The Early Papacy to the Synod of Chalcedon* — Dr. Adrian Fortescue.

F. = *Why Rome?* — By Seldom Peabody Delany.

G. = *The See of Peter* — Shotwell & Loomis.

H. = *History of Dogma* — Adolf Harnack.

(The last two, G and H, are quoted by (F), Delany.)

I. = *The Eastern Churches and the Papacy* — Rev. S. Herbert Scott, D.Phil., B.Litt. (Oxon.) (Anglican.)

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WHEN we consider the commission to baptize and teach given by Our Lord to his eleven disciples, as recorded at the close of the Gospel of Saint Matthew, we are at once struck by its all-embracing character — to teach and to baptize “all nations,” “teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” ; and then so as to insure that they will never fail to teach “all things” as He has taught them, He gives them His final promise to be with them “always, even unto the end of the world” (Saint Matthew 28:19-20).

And it is, of course, clear to any honest mind that this authoritative teaching body remains unimpaired, till the Last Day, as the Apostles themselves were all dead within seventy years, and the work of Christ would have been quickly undone unless this divine and infallible teaching and guidance in all that leads us on to eternal salvation were continued as Christ actually promises in this passage, till the end of all things.

Before leaving these words, it is important to note that Our Lord makes no distinction whatever between “fundamental” and “non-fundamental” doctrines, and so that Christians have no authority to do so either.

“All things whatsoever I have commanded you.”

Moreover, He promises that those with whom He is to be “till the end of the world” shall also have the direct assistance of the Holy Spirit in their task.

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (Saint John 14:26).

So that this divine teaching body which Our Lord established for all time, whenever new errors and heresies arise, has always the assistance of the Holy Ghost, who “brings all things to its remembrance,” to recall what rightly belongs to the original deposit of faith, and fearlessly to give an authoritative further definition of the truth when it becomes necessary, and to reject whatever is opposed to and contrary to it.

Moreover, Christ gives a terrible emphasis to the obligation to believe whatever the Apostles and their successors teach, for He tells the Apostles, at the same time that He commissions them to “preach the gospel to every creature”:

“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Saint Mark 16:15-16).

Again, when commissioning the seventy disciples, He tells them:

“He that heareth you heareth Me, and he that despiseth you despiseth Me, and he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me” (Saint Luke 10:16), and: — “If he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican” (Saint Matthew 18:17).

It is evident how deeply the Apostles were impressed with this primary obligation of keeping the Faith, even to the discipline of Excommunication, which they did not hesitate to inflict upon those that deserved it. Listen to Saint Paul:

“This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare: — holding faith and a good conscience, which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: “Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme” (1 Timothy 1:18-20).

And again, he commands to Saint Titus in Crete:

“A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted and sinneth, being condemned of himself” (Titus 3:10-11).

“These things speak and exhort and rebuke with all authority. — Let no man despise thee” (Titus 2:15).

And how heretics are to be avoided: — “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned: — and avoid them” (Romans 16:17).

Saint John, the Apostle of love, emphasizes this point:

“If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: — for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds” (2 John 1:10-11).

We thus see clearly that the Church founded by Our Lord was a divinely appointed teaching body, protected by Him and by the Holy Spirit, so that it alone had authority to teach the whole of the truth as contained in Christ’s revelation even until the end of the world, and was in fact, to use the expression of Saint Paul to Saint Timothy, “The Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15).

Our Lord’s will that this divine teaching body — His Church — should never lack the gift of unity is illustrated by His prayer on the night of His betrayal as recorded in Saint John:

“Neither pray I for these alone but for them also which shall believe on me through their word: — that they all may be one; as Thou,

Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: — that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me” (Saint John 17:20-21).

Now, as it would be sheer blasphemy to suggest that any prayer of Our Lord to His Father could fail of being granted (“I and my Father are one” Saint John 10:30), we know that this divine teaching body must be characterized by absolute unity in its government and teaching both of faith and morals as a fulfilment of His petition, and that any religious organization which fails to satisfy this test cannot possibly be the one which He commanded His Apostles to establish.

But there is one body of Christians, and one only, including about 398,277,000 of souls, which can truly be said to give a living example of the fulfilment of the prayer of Our Lord, (offered as it was on the point of His sacrificing Himself for the salvation of the world), and thereby exhibiting a great, a truly stupendous example of unity to the whole of Christendom nineteen centuries and more after that prayer was uttered, and that is the Church in communion with the Apostolic See of Rome, of which Saint Peter was the first bishop, and which he watered with his martyr’s blood. (Footnote: According to the Vatican radio in 1941, Catholics numbered 398,277,000 living souls. The Vatican is in touch with all foreign missions. [In 2013, the figure is just under 1.2 Billion.])

When one considers that this absolute unanimity of doctrine, both in faith and morals, and of humble submission to the selfsame teaching authority, is shared by peoples as much separated in thought, culture, and tradition as the Italian, Argentine, Greek, Chinese, Irish, Southern Indian, Congolese, Cambodian, Maltese, and Philippino, not to mention many others, and embraces some of the leading philosophers, mathematicians, scientists (such as Pasteur to name just one) and eminent judges, lawyers, and statesmen of all races, it is seen to constitute the one great standing miracle in the world of today, and to establish, at first glance, a very strong presumption (assuming the truth of Christianity), that this is the Church which Our Lord tells us is “His Church,” founded on a Rock, and against which, as He says in the same passage, “the gates of Hell shall not prevail” (Saint Matthew 16:18).

But why, it is natural to ask, should this Church, in communion with the See of Peter (that is Rome), exclusively exhibit these characteristics, which indicate so clearly that it is the one, which alone realizes the fulfilment of Our Lord’s prayer?

The answer is a very simple one. It is because Our Lord, although He created twelve Apostles to whom He gave inspiration and entrusted the establishment of His Church throughout the habitable world, and promised to be with them always (literally “all days”) until the end of time, thus including their successors, at the same time, to safeguard the maintenance of perfect unity, appointed one of them as the head, whose leadership the other eleven must accept, and whose special powers, most solemnly committed to him, were equally to endure in his successors for all time, just as were the powers held in common by all the Apostles.

“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Saint Matthew 24:35).

It is a matter of constant surprise to Catholics that so few of their separated brethren, however learned in the Scriptures, ever seem to undertake a serious examination of the position of Saint Peter, as shown so plainly in the New Testament, and the vital bearing that this has upon the authoritative teaching and government of the Christian Church of today.

In the first place it is significant that, although Saint Peter was not the first called of the Apostles (that privilege belonging to Saint Andrew), he is mentioned first in all the lists of the Apostles given in the New Testament (Saint Matthew 10:2, Saint Mark 3:16, Saint Luke 6:14, and the Acts 1:13).

Saint Matthew refers to him as “the first, Simon who is called Peter,” and also that he alone has a new name conferred by Our Lord (Saint John 1:42), “Cephas, which is by interpretation a stone,” which reminds one how God changed Abram’s name to Abraham, and gave as his reason “for a father of many nations have I made thee” (Genesis 17:5).

He is treated as Christ’s representative when tribute money is demanded, and Our Lord accepts this, and works the miracle, in which the tribute money for Himself and Saint Peter alone is found in the mouth of the fish (Saint Matthew 17:24-27).

Christ chooses Saint Peter’s boat from which to teach, and after the miraculous draught of fishes, Our Lord tells him “Fear not, from henceforth thou (singular) shalt catch men” (Saint Luke 5:1-10).

Now consider the three great, so-called “Petrine” texts.

First, Saint Matthew 16:13-18. Here we note that Our Lord enquires of the disciples first “Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?”

And after they had answered, asks them directly “Whom say ye that I am?”

At that Simon Peter, the Apostle everywhere mentioned as the first, at once acts for all the rest and confesses Our Lord’s divinity, and is told by Christ that this has been revealed to him alone by “My Father which is in heaven.”

Immediately Our Lord proceeds to inform him of that terrible authority which He will confer upon him (after Saint Peter’s subsequent fall and repentance), before His Ascension into heaven.

“And I say unto thee that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

Here it is necessary to remark (in order to anticipate age-long misrepresentation), that Our Lord was using the colloquial Aramaic (not Greek), and that this language has no genders, so that what He actually said was “Thou art Kipha (rock), and on this Kipha will I build my Church.”

Also that many of the Church Fathers, including Saint Augustine, were ignorant of Aramaic, and were also fond of finding in Holy Scripture other subordinate or mystical meanings, which in no way excluded the primary significance of the text.

Such secondary interpretations sometimes referred to the faith of Saint Peter, as that upon which Our Lord built His Church, but in no way conflict or take the place of the primary interpretation, impossible to avoid, that Saint Peter was to be the rock on which the Church was to be built, resting as it did upon Our Lord Himself, as Saint Paul so plainly puts it: “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinth 3:11).

Again, this passage (“thou art Peter,” et cetera) at once recalls that in which Christ tells us in a parable about “the house built by a wise man and founded on a rock” (Saint Matthew 7:24-25). “And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock” (also Saint Luke 6:48).

After thus promising to build His Church on Peter alone, came the awe-inspiring words:

“And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

Now here we must note two things, first, that the gift of the keys is to Saint Peter alone; Secondly, that though in a succeeding chapter (Saint Matthew 18:18) Our Lord promises this power of binding and loosing to the disciples generally, he first gives that also to Saint Peter alone, so that it is, as it were, in Saint Peter and through Saint Peter that they acquire it; in any case, given in this way, it emphasizes, to them all, Saint Peter’s headship.

But to return to this wonderful gift of the keys.

We read in the prophet Isaiah 22:22, that the Messiah will come thus — “The key of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so He shall open and none shall shut; and He shall shut and none shall open.” So that it is clear that powers, properly belonging to Himself alone, as the Messiah, He was imparting alone to Saint Peter.

The presentation of the keys of a town for centuries signified its capitulation to the enemy’s forces — abject surrender.

How Our Lord could have used language of greater power and significance in informing Saint Peter what his office and authority were to be in the Christian Church yet to be born, it seems impossible to conceive.

As Saint Chrysostom so beautifully expresses it: — “He puts into the hands of a mortal man power over all things in heaven, when He gave

him the keys” (B. page 123).

Now to turn to the second great Petrine text as given in Saint Luke 22:31-32, in the words, which Jesus spoke to His disciples at the last Supper before He went to His Passion:

“And the Lord said, ‘Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you (plural), that he may sift you (plural) as wheat; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.’” (Or, as the version translated by learned Oxford scholars from the Latin Vulgate, which depends on a different series of ancient manuscripts, puts it: — “Confirm thy brethren.”)

This statement of Our Lord is of striking significance: “Satan hath desired to . . . sift you (all the Apostles) as wheat.”

But does Our Lord pray for the twelve that they may be delivered from this imminent danger? Not at all.

He will deliver them in His own way.

“But I have prayed for thee (Peter) that thy faith fail not, and when thou art converted” (after his coming denial of his Lord) “strengthen (or confirm) thy brethren.”

The obligation of keeping the twelve out of the clutches of Satan and of confirming them for all time in the faith, is to be given alone to the head — Saint Peter — and appropriately so, as to him alone had been promised the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven!

What overwhelming power and authority, plainly visible to any honest-minded man or woman, is Our Lord thus about to entrust to Saint Peter, who we know was not his beloved Apostle, and whom Our Lord rebuked from time to time with a severity which is never recorded in the case of any other of the twelve.

Saint Peter fell, denied his Lord, but at once repented and “wept bitterly,” but his fall in no way affected his position as the Leader of the disciples.

In the account of the Resurrection given by Saint John (20:3-8) who has already recorded Saint Peter’s fall, we read how Saint Peter and Saint John, after hearing the news of the empty tomb from Saint Mary Magdalene, both ran to the sepulchre, and Saint John tells us that though he outdistanced Saint Peter and arrived first, “yet went he not in” until Saint Peter, to whom Our Lord had made wonderful promises, and ever treated as the head of the twelve, should precede him.

Besides, we have the word of the angel, “go tell His disciples and Peter” (Saint Mark 16:7), and Saint Paul tells us: that after Our Lord rose

again, “He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve,” emphasizing again his headship (1 Corinth 15:4-5).

Here we come to the third great Petrine text, given in the last chapter of Saint John’s Gospel (21:15-17):

“So when they had dined Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?”

Before going on, consider why it was that He demanded greater love of Saint Peter than He did of the others, even of His beloved Apostle Saint John?

The answer is plain and irresistible; because He was going finally to confer the terrible office, which He had promised, and so demanded greater love than that of the others, to enable him worthily to fulfil it.

Then Saint Peter replies: “ ‘Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee.’ He saith unto him, ‘feed my lambs’.”

“He saith unto him again the second time, ‘Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?’ He saith unto him, ‘Yea Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee.’ He saith unto him, ‘Feed my sheep.’

“He saith unto him the third time, ‘Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?’

“Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time, ‘lovest thou Me?’ and he said unto Him,

‘Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee.’

“Jesus saith unto him, ‘Feed my sheep’.”

At last, the dread authority and responsibility have been most solemnly conferred upon Saint Peter.

On him the Church is to be built, to him the keys of the kingdom of heaven are entrusted, his unflinching faith is to confirm the Apostles, his brethren, lest they be “sifted as wheat” by Satan, and now all the sheep and the lambs — the clergy and laity of Christ’s Church — about to be born of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, are entrusted to him to feed, thus conferring upon him universal rule and jurisdiction over every baptized Christian.

And this is to endure until the Day of judgment, for his Lord tells him, in company with the other Apostles: “Lo, I am with you always even until the end of the world” (Saint Matthew 28:20).

“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away” (Saint Matthew 24:35).

And now let us recall how Saint Peter at once commenced to fulfil the great trust imposed upon him.

Here I shall give the sequence of events as set out in the pamphlet published by the Catholic Truth Society, written for it by Monsignor Robert Hugh Benson, the son of the former Archbishop of Canterbury, and a convert to the Church, entitled, “*A City Set on a Hill*,” which deserves to be widely read, and which has been of assistance to me in various parts of this essay.

Peter takes the lead in filling up the vacant apostolate (Acts 1:15).

He first preaches at Pentecost and summons men to salvation (Acts 2:14), and is accepted by the world as the leader and interpreter of the rest (Acts 2:37-38, and 41).

He works the first Church miracle even though associated with John (as if to show his official relation as distinguished from John’s personal relation to Christ (Acts 3:1-10), and comments on it to the multitude (Acts 3:12).

He is the defender of the Church before the rulers (Acts 4:8 and following).

He utters the first anathema and it is ratified markedly by God (in the death of Ananias and Saphira). (Acts 5:2-11).

His shadow, alone among all, works miracles (Acts 5:15).

He is the first to raise the dead (Acts 9:40).

To him alone is miraculously revealed that the Gentiles are to be received into the Church. He baptizes the first Gentiles and convinces the other Apostles that they must receive them equally with the Jews (Acts 10 and 11).

He is the object of the first divine interposition on behalf of an individual, and is rescued from death (being released from prison by an Angel), when another Apostle is killed (Acts 12:5-17).

He opens the first Council, and lays down principles afterwards accepted by it (Acts 15:6-12).

Saint Paul twice speaks of resisting him (simply on a matter of discipline) as if it were a very serious step. (See Galatians 2:11-14).

The last half of the book of the Acts of the Apostles describes the work of the great Apostle of the Gentiles — Saint Paul — but to use this as an argument against the absolute headship of Saint Peter, so clearly illustrated in the first part, and say that “Peter completely fades from the picture,” is simply to trifle with God’s revelation.

We now come to the ages of almost continuous persecution, which lasted until the Edict of Milan, A.D. 313, and during which a number of the successors of Saint Peter in his See of Rome were martyred for the faith, and the hundreds of miles of catacombs today existing under the City give some idea of how many times the lives of the early Christians must have been spent literally underground, in an endeavour to escape from their persecutors.

During these years of persecution throughout the then civilized world, from such scanty records as remain to us it would be unlikely to find either that Saint Peter's successors could have much opportunity to be consulted by the bishops throughout the world (the successors of the Apostles as a body), or effectively to exercise their headship.

And yet we have examples from time to time, showing that Christians turned naturally to their head for advice and direction, and likewise received discipline at the hands of the Roman bishops, realizing that Christ's unique gifts to them were to be with them, "living and exercising judgment in their successors" until the end of the world.

The first example, and a very striking one, is found in the Epistle of Pope Saint Clement written in A.D. 96 to the Corinthians.

Saint Clement comes third after Saint Peter in the succession of Bishops of the Apostolic See of Rome.

There had been disorders in the Church at Corinth, and the Christians there had arisen against their clergy, and driven them out. But Saint John the Evangelist was still alive at Ephesus, and Corinth is much nearer to Ephesus than to Rome, and yet the duty of restoring discipline is undertaken by Saint Clement, and clearly for one reason only, because as the successor of Saint Peter, and holding the keys, with the care of all the lambs and sheep entrusted to him, he has jurisdiction and authority over the whole flock of Christ — the Christian Church.

Listen to the tone of authority that Saint Clement adopts (probably the same Clement by the way, that Saint Paul tells us, in Philippians 4:3, has his name written "in the Book of Life"):

"You, therefore, that laid the foundation of sedition, submit yourselves unto the presbyters and receive correction unto repentance, bending the knees of your hearts.

"Learn to be submissive and lay aside the proud and boastful stubbornness of your tongues. . . .

"But if some be disobedient unto the words spoken by Him (God) through us, let them see that they will involve themselves in grave transgression, and danger, but we shall be guiltless of their sin" (F., page 166, quoting G., page 327-239; also A., page 67, and C., and Clement to Corinthians 59, 1).

And further on: “You will give us joy and pleasure if you obey what we have written by the Holy Ghost. . . . We have sent trustworthy and wise men, who have lived without blame among us from youth to old age; these shall be witnesses between you and us.

“We have done so that you may know that all our care has been and is that you should soon be in peace” (E., p. 35, Saint Clement to Corinthians 63, 2-4).

The Pope was obeyed, and his letter was read for years afterwards in the Church at Corinth (E., page 36; Dionysius of Corinth, quoted in Eusebius 4.23, and C., 23, 11).

Saint Polycarp, the martyred Bishop of Smyrna, went to Rome, when ninety years old, to visit the reigning bishop, Saint Anicetus, to arrange with him the date of keeping Easter, and showed him that the Roman method of computing the date differed from that which he had learned from Saint John himself.

Saint Anicetus gave Saint Polycarp the honour of celebrating the Holy Mass in the Cathedral of Saint John Lateran but was immovable in retaining the traditional Roman method of fixing the date of Easter, which later was received by the Universal Church.

A very important witness to the authority of the Apostolic See is Saint Irenaeus (A.D. 130-200) the martyred Bishop of Lyons, the pupil of Saint Polycarp, who quotes the latter’s reminiscences of Saint John the Evangelist.

In his book, “*Against Heresies*,” he speaks of the legacy of tradition handed down by the various Apostolic Churches (that is, having an Apostle for their founder), and then takes one as an instance:

“The very great and ancient and illustrious Church founded and organized at Rome by the two glorious Apostles Peter and Paul, and the faith declared to mankind and handed down to our own time through its bishops in their succession” (F., page 171, quoting G., page 267).

Then follows a passage over which Catholics and Protestants have differed as to the translation, so one may take it as given by the German (non-Catholic) Professor Harnack, whose reputation for erudition is well known throughout the world:

“With this Church (in Rome) on account of its pre-eminent authority; every Church must be in agreement that is, the faithful everywhere, among whom the tradition of the Apostles has been continuously preserved” (F., page 172, quoting Harnack’s *History of Dogma*, Volume 2, page 157, note 3; also A., page 67).

Pope Saint Victor reigned from A.D. 188-198. He excommunicated Theodore of Byzantium (Constantinople) for teaching the Adoptionist

heresy, and also all the bishops of Asia Minor for persisting in celebrating Easter according to the Jewish reckoning.

Saint Irenaeus addressed him, and deprecated such severity, (which was relaxed by subsequent Roman bishops), but never questioned in any way Saint Victor's right to act as he had done.

The great Saint Cyprian, martyred Archbishop of Carthage, in North Africa, had some controversy with Saint Cornelius, martyred Bishop of Rome, on the question of the rebaptism of heretics, but listen to what he writes (about A.D. 251) in his fifty-ninth Epistle, of certain heretics:

“After all this, and having had a bishop set up for them by heretics, they dare to set sail, and to carry letters from schismatic and profane persons to the Chair of Peter and the primatial Church, whence sacerdotal unity had its rise; nor do they consider that those are the Romans whose faith was celebrated by the praise of the Apostle (Romans 1:8) and to whom unfaith cannot have access” (A., page 68).

After the Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325), the great champion of Orthodoxy at that Council, Saint Athanasius, now Archbishop of Alexandria, was falsely accused by the Arian heretics, and was summoned, with Marcellus of Ancyra, to Rome by Pope Julius, as a judge.

The historian, Socrates of Constantinople, writes of this episode:

“There, each laid his case before Julius, Bishop of Rome, who sent them back again into the East, restoring them to their respective Sees by virtue of his letters, in the exercise of the Church of Rome's peculiar privilege; and at the same time, in the liberty of that prerogative, sharply rebuking those by whom they had been deposed” (I., page 105. Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica* ("Church History"), II, 15 *Patrology of Greek Fathers*, (PG) 67, 212).

A little later — A.D. 385 — Saint Optatus of Milevis, in Africa, wrote to a Donatist schismatic:

“You cannot deny that you know that the Chair of Peter first of all was fixed in the city of Rome, in which Peter, the head of all the Apostles, sat; whence, too, he was named Cephas.

“In which single Chair unity was to be observed by all, so that the rest of the Apostles should not each maintain a chair to themselves; and that forthwith he should be a schismatic and a sinner who against that singular chair set up another” (B., page 115, quoting *Saint Optatus contra Parmenianus*, book 2, chapter 6).

Saint Ambrose, the holy Archbishop of Milan, who received the great Saint Augustine into the Christian Church, writing within a few years of Saint Optatus, says:

“This is that Peter of whom he said: — ‘You are Peter, and on this rock I will build My Church,’ therefore where Peter is there is the

Church. Where the Church is there is no death but eternal life” (*Commentary on Psalms* 40; see B., page 116).

And writing to the Emperor Gratian on behalf of a great Western Council of bishops:

“Your clemency was to be entreated not to suffer the Roman Church, the head of the whole Roman world, and that sacred faith of the Apostles, to be thrown into disturbance.

“For thence, as from a fountain-head, the rights of venerable communion flow unto all” (B., page 116, quoting Mansi, (his great work on Church councils) tome 4, 622).

How in harmony with this are the words of Saint Peter Chrysologus, the great preacher and doctor of the Church and Archbishop of Ravenna, in his reply to the heretic Eutyches, who was finally condemned at the Ecumenical (or General) Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451.

He says: — “We exhort you to attend obediently in all things to all that is written by the most blessed Pope of the City of Rome. For blessed Peter, who lives and presides in his own See, grants the truth of the faith to those who ask him” (C., page 24, quoting Leo, Epistle 25).

Where could you find the doctrine of Papal infallibility in matters of faith more beautifully expressed? And this nearly fifteen hundred years ago!

But Saint Jerome, one of the greatest if not the greatest Biblical student of all time (quoted as an authority on Holy Scripture in the 39 Articles of the Church of England), expresses his submission to the Primacy of the Bishop of Rome in a more startling manner than any of his contemporaries.

What then does this most eminent “Bible Christian” say about the prerogatives of Saint Peter and his successors as conferred upon them by Jesus Christ?

Saint Jerome was in the Holy Land, and found three bishops, each claiming to be the lawful occupant of the See of Antioch.

He had to decide with which he was to enter into communion as the rightful bishop, and in his perplexity appealed to Pope Damasus to guide him aright.

He says in his Epistle No. 15 “to Damasus” (B., page 117; also E., page 50):

“I speak with the successor of the fisherman, and the disciple of the Cross.

“I, who follow none as my chief but Christ, am associated in communion with your Blessedness, that is, with the See of Peter.

“On that rock the Church is built, I know.

“Whoso shall eat the Lamb outside that house is profane.

“Whoever is not in the Ark with Noah will perish when the flood prevails.”

Then he mentions the three bishops claiming the See of Antioch “I know not Vitalis, Meletius I reject, I am ignorant of Paulinus.

“Whoso gathers not with you scatters, that is, he who is not of Christ is of Antichrist.”

The name of Saint Augustine, Bishop and Doctor of the Church, is too well known because of his eminence, to make it necessary to emphasize the weight of his testimony (A.D. 391).

Writing to a Manichaeon, he says: — “I am held in the Catholic Church by the consent of nations and of races: by authority, begun in miracles, nurtured in hope, attaining its growth in charity, established in antiquity.

“I am held by the succession of bishops down to the present episcopate from the very See of Peter the Apostle, to whom the Lord, after His Resurrection, entrusted His sheep to be fed.

“Lastly, I am held by the very name of Catholic, which, not without cause amid so many heresies, this Church alone has retained, in such sort that, whereas all heretics wish to be called Catholics, nevertheless to any stranger who asked, ‘Where is the meeting of the Catholic Church held?’, no heretic would dare to point out his own basilica or house.” (A., page 72, quoting C., Epistle Manichaeon, Fundamental, 4: 5.)

Space prevents more than two quotations of many from Pope Saint Leo I (the Great), A.D. 440-461, as we shall come to him again in dealing with the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon:

“The order of truth remains; blessed Peter, keeping the strength of the rock, does not abandon the helm of the Church. Whatever we do rightly . . . is his work, whose power lives in his See. (E., page 42, quoting Sermon 3, and C., 2; *Patrology of Latin Fathers*, (PL) 54, 145-146).

“In the person of my lowliness he is seen, he is honoured, in whom remains the care of all pastors, and of the sheep of their charge.

“His power does not fail, even in an unworthy heir.” (E., page 42, Sermon 3, chapter 4, PL 54, 147-148).

One could give many more examples of recognition of the pre-eminent authority of the Roman bishops, taken from the early Fathers of both East and West, but let us now consider the evidence of the worldwide acknowledgment of this authority and of its divine origin given by the third Ecumenical (or General) Council held at Ephesus in A.D. 431, and by the fourth Ecumenical Council held at Chalcedon (also in Asia Minor) in A.D. 451.

These are the first General Councils of the whole Christian Church of which the recorded acts have come down to us, our knowledge of the doings of the first and second General Councils (Nicaea and first Constantinople) being very inadequate.

In an essay of this kind it is impossible to do more than touch on certain details which illustrate our subject, but — even so the records will be seen to be illuminating, especially when it is remembered that here we have assemblies which consist almost entirely of Eastern bishops, furthest removed from the guiding influence of the Apostolic See of Rome, and under the immediate protection of the Roman Emperor of Constantinople.

At that time the first Episcopal See in the world was, of course, Rome, while second in rank was Alexandria and third Antioch; Alexandria ranking second because founded by Saint Peter’s disciple Saint Mark the Evangelist, and Antioch third because Saint Peter had established his chair there for some years, before transferring it to Rome.

The Archbishopric of Constantinople was also of very great dignity and importance as situated in the new Capital of the Empire.

In after years these Archbishops, and also those of Jerusalem were called “Patriarchs,” the Pope being Patriarch of the entire West.

A few years before the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus was summoned by the Emperor, Nestorius became Archbishop of Constantinople, and began to teach a heresy in regard to Our Lord’s person which was destructive of the Catholic doctrine of the Incarnation.

Saint Cyril, at that time, was Archbishop of Alexandria, and as Nestorius was obstinate in his false teaching, and would not be persuaded to abandon it, he wrote to Pope Saint Celestine saying that he was obliged by canonical custom to do so concerning Nestorius, and asked him to deal with the matter.

The reply of the Pope is a stern command to Saint Cyril to do as follows:

“Wherefore, assuming to yourself the authority of our See, and using our stead with power, you will deliver the following sentence with strict severity” (C., page 17, quoting Mansi, 4, 1019).

The sentence was, that unless Nestorius abjures his heresy within ten days of the receipt of the Pope's communication through his legate Saint Cyril, he is to be cast out of the Catholic Church and suffer excommunication, and that, for the time, Saint Cyril is to take charge of the See of Constantinople.

Not much sign of "Primus inter pares" (first among equals) apparent here!

You see the second bishop of Christendom not daring to act, and seeking directions from the first — Pope Celestine.

You then see the first commanding the second to act as his legate, and after only ten days' grace to excommunicate and cast out of the Christian Church the Archbishop of Constantinople under the very eyes of the Emperor.

And all this accepted without a murmur as right and proper — a worthy example of authoritative defence of God's truth, and as became the Apostolic See.

After a warning from Saint Cyril to John, Archbishop of Antioch, that if he raised any difficulties he might share Nestorius's fate, the latter advised Nestorius to make his submission.

When the General Council of Ephesus met in 431 in obedience to a summons from the Emperor and with the approval of the Pope, it found that the matter had already been settled, and their sentence was as follows:

“We being necessarily impelled thereto by the canons, and by the letter of our most holy Father and colleague, Celestine, Bishop of the Roman Church, with many tears, have arrived at the following sentence against him (Nestorius).

“Our Lord Jesus Christ, who has been blasphemed by him, defines by this present most holy Synod that the same Nestorius is deprived of Episcopal dignity, and all sacerdotal intercourse” (C., page 20, quoting Mansi 4, 1212).

The reference to “the Canons” was on account of the fact that Nestorius had three times been ordered to appear before the Council to explain his neglect of the command of the Pope to submit within ten days and had not done so.

The legates sent by the Pope had been delayed, but on arrival approved of the sentence.

The statement of one of the legates, Philip, a priest, inserted in the Acts of the Council, is so celebrated that it must not be omitted here. He says:

“It is doubtful to no one, nay, it is known to all ages, that holy and blessed Peter, the prince and head of the Apostles, the pillar of the

faith and the foundation of the Catholic Church, received from Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the human race, the keys of the Kingdom, and that to him was given the power of loosing and of binding sins — who up to this time and always lives in his successors and gives judgment.

“His successor and representative therefore, our holy and most blessed Pope, Bishop Celestine, has sent us to this Synod to supply his place (C., page 21, quoting Mansi 4, 1296).

No objection was ever raised anywhere in the Christian East against these words, or the claim which they put forth.

Not many years after Nestorianism had been condemned by Pope Saint Celestine, acting through Saint Cyril, and his legates at the Council of Ephesus, another heresy — a reaction from the former — began to be taught by Eutyches, an Abbot of Constantinople, and although condemned by his own Archbishop, Saint Flavian of Constantinople, and afterwards by Pope Saint Leo I (the Great), was taken up by Dioscorus, Archbishop of Alexandria, and spread throughout his dependent sees.

The attempted second Ecumenical Council of Ephesus (The “Robber Council” A.D. 449) having proved abortive and been declared null and void by Pope Leo, and an orthodox Emperor and Empress having succeeded the Eutychianizing Emperor Theodosius II at Constantinople, the fourth Ecumenical Council was summoned by the Emperor Gratian and the Empress Pulcheria with the approval of Pope Leo.

At this Council, which was held at Chalcedon, near Constantinople, the true faith as to the divine and human natures of Christ was defined in a famous letter of Pope Saint Leo known as “the Tome.” When this was read at the second session of the Council, the bishops cried out:

“This is the faith of the Fathers; this is the faith of the Apostles. We all believe so; the orthodox believe so. Anathema to him who does not so believe.

“Peter has spoken thus through Leo” (E., page 58, quoting Acts of Ephesus 2, Hardouin 2, 306 and Mansi).

It may be remarked here, parenthetically, that this definition of Pope Leo that Christ has two perfect natures, one divine and the other human, united in one person, may be found in the 39 articles of the Church of England and in the Westminster Shorter Catechism of the Church of Scotland to-day, but why do they accept a definition made with supreme authority by Pope Leo I in 451, and reject the equally authoritative definitions of his successors, when Peter has spoken through their mouths as surely as he did through that of Leo?

As Dioscorus was the second bishop in Christendom, and had done his best to foment this heresy, his solemn condemnation was one of the painful duties of the Council, which the bishops assembled, asked the Papal legates to pronounce on their behalf.

The legates thereupon summed up the many grievous offences of Dioscorus, and concluded:

“Wherefore the most holy and most blessed Archbishop of great and elder Rome, by us and the present most holy Synod, together with the thrice blessed and praiseworthy Peter the Apostle, who is the rock and base of the Catholic Church and the foundation of the orthodox faith, has stripped him of the episcopal and of all sacerdotal dignity; wherefore this most holy and great Synod will vote what is in accordance with the Canons against the aforesaid Dioscorus” (C., page 35, quoting Mansi 6, 147 and 1047; also B., page 92).

Next, each bishop expressed his approval of the condemnation and signed it — about 630 in all.

The Council also addressed a synodal letter to Pope Leo.

Mr. Allies in “*The See of Saint Peter*”, page 37, quotes certain passages from it as follows:

“They acknowledge him as sitting in the place of Peter, ‘the interpreter to all of the voice of the blessed Peter.’ They declare that ‘he presided over them’ as ‘the head over the members’; they ask for his consent to their acts ‘because every success of the children is reckoned to the parents who own it’.” (See Mansi 6, 147-155).

But now comes a phrase to which particular attention may well be given.

They refer to Dioscorus and say: — “He stretched forth his madness against him who was entrusted by the Saviour with the guardianship of the Vine — we mean your Holiness” (A. page 76, quoting *Works of Saint Leo*, Epistle 98).

This beautiful reference to the papal prerogatives suggests the following reflection:

The, bishops of the Christian East recognize (and the bishops of the West are in unanimous accord with them), that Pope Leo in the year 451, over four hundred years after the death of Our Lord, had received from Him the guardianship of the Vine, and this on account of the promises made to Saint Peter, because in the Council they had cried: — “Peter has spoken by Leo.”

Now such an overwhelming authority could only be withdrawn by Him who originally conferred it, and in as solemn a manner; if not it endures — to use Our Lord’s own words “all days even unto the end of the world,” and is equally binding upon every Christian conscience today as it was upon the whole Christian world in the times of Popes Celestine and Leo.

But Our Lord tells us that when He comes to us again we “shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory” (Saint Matthew 24:30).

As this has not occurred, obedience must be rendered to him who alone has the keys, who confirms his brethren in the faith, who has the care of all the lambs and the sheep; who, “living and presiding in his See gives the faith to those that seek it,” and who “has been entrusted by the Saviour with the guardianship of the Vine” (the Christian Church) even unto the end of all things.

The Fathers of the Council had passed a number of Canons including the 28th proposing that the See of Constantinople should rank above Alexandria and Antioch because “Constantinople is New Rome.”

The legates had not consented to this and the Pope said that he annulled it “by the authority of Blessed Peter” (C., page 42, quoting Saint Leo, Epistles 104, 105, and 106), and gave his approval to the doctrinal decrees of the Council, the Emperor Marcian writing to say that the Pope was right in thus guarding the ancient Canons (C., page 42, quoting Epistle 110).

Anyone wishing to learn more about the controversy concerning the 28th Canon can find it in Dom John Chapman’s “*Bishop Gore and the Catholic Claims*”, pages 84-88.

The difficulties raised by non-Catholic writers as to the conduct of Pope Vigilius at the fifth Ecumenical Council, and of Pope Honorius in connection with the Monothelite heresy are fully answered by the late Abbot Chapman, O.S.B., in his “*The First Eight General Councils and Papal Infallibility*,” published by the Catholic Truth Society, to which I am much indebted, and also in his “*Condemnation of Pope Honorius*” (Catholic Truth Society).

The testimonies of Eastern bishops and Ecclesiastics to the Petrine prerogatives of Rome are the more significant as they come from other Patriarchates than the Roman, and because it was the East, sadly, which finally broke away from Catholic Communion.

Their claim to have been unchangeable in doctrine seems strange indeed when one considers to what they have committed themselves in the times before the Photian schism of A.D. 867.

In the year 514, a letter was sent to Pope Saint Hormisdas by about two hundred Archimandrites, priests, and deacons of Syria, suffering under ecclesiastical disorders:

“To the most holy and blessed Patriarch of the whole earth, Hormisdas, holding the See of Peter, Prince of the Apostles, the entreaty and supplications of the humble Archimandrites and other monks of the province of the Second Syria:

“Christ our God has appointed you Chief Pastor, and teacher, and Physician of souls, we beseech you, most blessed Father, to arise, and greatly condole with the Body torn to pieces, for You are the Head of all; and avenge the Faith despised, the Canons trodden under foot, the Fathers blasphemed.

“The flock itself comes forward to recognize its own Shepherd, in you its true Pastor and Doctor, to whom the care of the sheep is entrusted for their salvation” (B., page 141, quoting Mansi 8, 428).

In February 536, Pope Saint Agapetus visited Constantinople during the reign of the great Emperor Justinian.

Having found the Patriarch of Constantinople, Anthimus, tainted with the Monophysite heresy, he deposed him, and consecrated the orthodox Mennas to take his place, in the Church of Saint Mary on March 13th, 536.

He also insisted on Justinian’s “clearing himself” (of the suspicion of heresy) “by presenting the Formula of (Pope) Hormisdas. (*The formula of Pope Hormisdas demanded absolute submission to the authority of the See of Rome.*) (*Rusticus the Deacon, and nephew of Pope Vigilius, a few years later, states that about two thousand five hundred Eastern bishops signed this formula, as did the bishops at the General Council held at Constantinople in 869.*) (Dom John Chapman’s *Studies in the Early Papacy*, pages 213-16, also quoting Migne, P L 67, 1251-52, and Mansi 8, 579. See C., page 81.) “The confession of Faith which Justinian sent to Agapetus opens with it.” (I., pages 231-33, quoting Mansi 8, 840 and 857).

The Monothelite heresy, arising after the year 622, which denied that Our Lord had a perfect human as well as a divine Will, caused great disturbances and distress in the East for many years.

Shortly after Saint Sophronius had been appointed Patriarch of Jerusalem, he wrote an encyclical defining clearly what was later recognized by the sixth Ecumenical Council (held in A.D. 681) as the Catholic doctrine in this matter, and sent it to the other four Patriarchs, of Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, and Constantinople.

He first expresses his adhesion to the previous five Ecumenical Councils and the letters of Saint Cyril of Alexandria and of those bishops, which Saint Cyril accepted, and proceeds:

“And also equally with those holy writings of the all-wise Cyril, I receive as holy and honoured together with them, and as propagating the same orthodoxy, the God-given and inspired letter of the great and illustrious and saintly Leo” (the Tome of Chalcedon), “the light of the Roman Church, or rather of the Church beneath the sun, which he, moved clearly by the Holy Ghost, wrote against the wicked Eutyches, and the hateful and perverse Nestorius to the praiseworthy Bishop of the Royal City, Flavian (of Constantinople), which I denominate and define to be the pillar of Orthodoxy (following the holy Fathers, who rightly called it thus), as teaching us all orthodoxy and destroying all heresy, and driving it away from the God-protected halls of our holy Catholic Church.

“And together with these inspired syllables and characters I accept all his letters and teachings as proceeding from the mouth of Peter

the Coryphaeus, (this is a term for Saint Peter as ‘head of the chorus of Apostles’,) and I kiss them and salute them and embrace them with all my soul” (D., pages 18 and 19, quoting Mansi 9, 11 and 461-509).

Saint Sophronius died in 638, and in 649 Stephen, Bishop of Dora (or Dor), and head of the patriarchal Synod of Jerusalem, presented a letter to Pope Saint Martin I at the Lateran Council, in connection with the sufferings which his country was enduring owing to the Monothelite heresy. He says:

“And for this cause, sometimes we asked for water to our head and to our eyes a fountain of tears, sometimes the wings of a dove, according to Holy David, that we might fly away and announce these things to the Chair which rules and presides over all, I mean to yours, the head and highest, for the healing of the whole wound.

“For this it has been accustomed to do from of old, and from the beginning with power by its Canonical or Apostolical authority, because the truly great Peter, head of the Apostles, was clearly thought worthy not only to be entrusted with the keys of heaven, alone apart from the rest, to open it worthily to believers, or to close it justly to those who disbelieve the Gospel of Grace, but because he was also first commissioned to feed the sheep of the whole Catholic Church; for ‘Peter,’ said He, ‘love you Me? Feed my sheep’; and again, because he had, in a manner peculiar and special, a faith in the Lord stronger than all and unchangeable, to be converted and to confirm his fellows and spiritual brethren when tossed about, as having been adorned by God Himself, incarnate for us, with power and sacerdotal authority” (D., page 20-21, quoting Mansi 10, 893).

To show that the same doctrine in regard to the authority of the Apostolic See was held at Constantinople at that time, just as in Jerusalem, we need only listen to the words of the Abbot Saint Maximus of Constantinople, who has always been recognized by both East and West alike as a great saint.

Writing a letter concerning the heretic Pyrrhus, who at that time held the See of Constantinople, and was afterwards anathematized by the sixth Ecumenical Council (third of Constantinople) he says, about A.D. 650:

“If he would neither be a heretic, nor be considered one, let him not satisfy this or that person, for this is superfluous and irrational; since just as when one is scandalized by him, all are scandalized, so when one is satisfied, all beyond a doubt are satisfied too.

“Let him hasten before all to satisfy the Roman See. That done, all will everywhere, with one accord, hold him pious and orthodox.

“For he merely talks idly when he thinks of persuading and imposing on me, for instance, and does not satisfy and implore the most blessed Pope of the most holy Roman Church, that is, the Apostolic See.

“This See, from the very Incarnate Word of God, and also from all holy Councils, according to the sacred Canons and rules, has received and holds in all persons, and for all things, empire, authority, and power to bind and to loose, over the universal holy Churches of God, which are in all the world.

“For when this binds and looses, so also does the Word in Heaven, who rules the heavenly virtues.”

And just before:

“Who anathematizes the Roman See, that is, the Catholic Church?” (B., pages 108-109, quoting Mansi 10, 692.)

The sixth Ecumenical Council, held at Constantinople in A.D. 681, addressed a letter to the Emperor in regard to Pope Saint Agatho’s letter defining the Catholic Faith as against the Monothelite heresy, which they had dutifully accepted, and in it used the following words:

“The ancient City of Rome proffered to you a divinely written confession and caused the daylight of dogmas to rise by the western parchment.

“And the ink shone, and by Agatho, Peter spoke” (D., page 101, quoting Mansi 11, 657).

This recalls the exclamations of the Fathers at Chalcedon two hundred and thirty years before.

If it were not for limitations of space, hundreds of testimonies to the divinely established authority of the See of Saint Peter over the whole Church of Christ might be quoted from the Saints, the Fathers, the General Councils and lesser Synods of the first eight centuries, but I must give one final example from the letter of Saint Theodore, Abbot of the Studium, a monastery in Constantinople, whose feast is celebrated by the Greek and Russian Churches (unhappily separated from Rome) to the present day.

It was at the time of a persecution by the Iconoclasts, only about half a century before the schism of Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople, and this is what he wrote (after A.D. 803) to Saint Paschal, the Pope then reigning at Rome:

“Hear, O Apostolic head, divinely appointed Shepherd of Christ’s sheep, Key-bearer of the Kingdom of Heaven, rock of the faith upon whom is built the Catholic Church.

“For Peter is you who adorn and govern the Chair of Peter. . . .

“Hither then, from the West, imitator of Christ, arise and repel not for ever (Psalm 93:23). (Psalm 94 in King James’s Version.)

“To you spoke Christ our Lord: ‘and you being one day converted, shall strengthen your brethren.’

“Behold the hour and the place; Help us, you that are set by God for this.

“Stretch forth your hand so far as you can.

“You have strength with God, through being the first of all” (Letter of Saint Theodore and four other abbots to Pope Paschal, C., page 74, quoting Book II, Epistle 12, Migne, PG., 99, 1152-53).

And now this brief examination as to the nature of the teaching and ruling authority conferred by Christ upon His Church (“the Church of the living God — the pillar and ground of truth,” as Saint Paul describes her in 1 Timothy 3:15) must be concluded.

We have seen in her a supernatural example of continuity and gradual development as exhibited in the Gospels and Epistles, the earliest Christian Fathers, the General Councils of the Universal Church, and in the confessions of the Saints in all parts of the Christian world for several centuries; and what else do we find?

To begin with, we observe her, even in the midst of the period of the persecutions, and ever after, struggling against one heresy after another, and thus making clear the meaning of Saint Paul’s words in 1 Corinth 11:19: “There must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.”

These heresies would have been destructive of Christianity, and would have evacuated the basic dogmas of the Incarnation and of the Redemption of all true meaning.

But who are they who consistently defend the truth, defining it more fully only when necessary, and to whom the Christian world turns always in its distress, to save the Faith, and who fail not in their God-appointed task?

The successors of Saint Peter, bearing the keys, feeding the lambs and the sheep with sound doctrine, confirming their brethren in the faith even as Blessed Peter did, leading them under the, guidance of the Holy Spirit “into all truth.”

Today one hardly hears mention of the great heresies which, in the early centuries, threatened the very existence of Christianity; Gnosticism, Arianism, Nestorianism, Eutychianism, Donatism, Monothelitism; they either do not or hardly exist; and today after four centuries, Protestantism is clearly losing, through Rationalism and Modernism, what part it held of the Christian Revelation, its churches are more and more deserted in many lands, and it is too plainly following the course of the earlier great heresies which afflicted the Church, and which are now practically no more; simply another of those many houses “built upon the sand” (Saint Matthew 7:26).

On the other hand, what of those who have been loyal to Our Lord and to the voice of Peter and his successors to whom He promised (in company with the other Apostles, now represented by their successors the bishops of the Catholic Church) to be with them until the end of the world?

We see a Christian Church three hundred and ninety-eight millions strong, [1.2 billion in 2013] united in a miraculous manner in faith, hope, and charity, just as was the multitude who “were of one heart and of one soul” at the day of Pentecost (Acts 4:32).

They share the same life-giving Sacraments, assist at the same Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and join in the same devotions.

They pray for one another — those in this life intercede for the faithful departed, the blessed dead pray in their turn for the living, the living beg the intercession of the Saints reigning with Christ in heaven, who in turn assist them by their prayers at the throne of God, and so is truly realized the Communion of Saints.

Here one finds the complete fulfilment of all of which we read in the Holy Scriptures.

The way to salvation is clear, so that the poor, the ignorant, the illiterate, can find it just as easily as the highly educated and intellectually brilliant.

But what is required of the Catholic is childlike humility — he makes his own the words of the child Samuel, “Speak Lord for Thy servant heareth” (1 Samuel 3:10), knowing as he does that he has a divinely appointed guide, “a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night” (Exodus 13:21), to lead him (if he loyally co-operates with the divine grace vouchsafed to him) to his true native country — which is Heaven.

O God who did teach the hearts of Your faithful by sending to them the light of Your Holy Spirit, grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in His holy comfort.

We ask this, through Our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the same Spirit, ever one God, in a world without end. Amen.

APPENDIX.

As some controversialists in the past have asserted that Saint Peter was never in Rome, contrary to the unanimous tradition of the Christian Church — East and West — I think it well to include the following from the recently published Dissertation of the Anglican scholar, the Rev. S. Herbert Scott, which gained for him a Research Doctorate Degree in the University of Oxford, entitled “*The Eastern Churches and the Papacy.*”

On page 382, he says:

One would indeed have to search at this time of day to find any scholar of the first rank confident that Peter was never at Rome.

Writing impartially and simply from the standpoint of an archaeologist, the evidence of Professor Lanciani is conclusive:

“I write about the monuments of Rome from a strictly archaeological point of view, avoiding questions which pertain, or are supposed to pertain to religious controversy. For the archaeologist the presence and execution of Saints Peter and Paul in Rome are facts established beyond a shadow of a doubt by purely monumental evidence.

“There was a time when persons belonging to different creeds made it almost a case of conscience to affirm or deny *a priori* those facts according to their acceptance or rejection of the tradition of any particular Church.

“This state of feeling is a matter of the past, at least for those who have followed the progress of recent discoveries and of critical literature. . . . There is no event of the imperial age and of Imperial Rome which is attested by so many noble structures all of which point to the same conclusion — the presence and execution of the Apostles in the capital of the Empire.

“Constantine raised the monumental basilicas over their tombs in the Via Cornelia and the Via Ostiensis. . . . The 29th day of June was accepted as the anniversary of Peter’s execution. . . . Christians and Pagans alike named their children Peter and Paul, when sculptors, painters, medallists, goldsmiths, workers in glass and enamel, and engravers of precious stones all began to reproduce in Rome the likeness of the second century and continued to do so till the fall of the Empire.

“Must we consider them all as labouring under a delusion, or as conspiring in the commission of a gigantic fraud?

“There is no doubt, for instance, that the likenesses of Saints Peter and Paul have been carefully preserved in Rome ever since their lifetime, and were familiar to everyone, even to school children.

“The portraits have come down to us by scores. They are painted in the cubiculi of the Catacombs, engraved in gold leaf in the so-called *vetri cemeteriali*, cast in bronze, hammered in silver, or copper, and designed in mosaic. The type never varies. Saint Peter’s face is full and strong, with short curly hair and beard, while Saint Paul appears more wiry and thin, slightly bald, with a long-pointed beard.

“The antiquity and genuineness of both types cannot be doubted.”

Quoting R. Lanciani, *Pagan and Christian Rome*, London, 1892 (pages 122 and 212).
