

PRIMITIVE AND CATHOLIC
CHRISTIANITY

BY

ARTHUR CUSHMAN McGIFFERT

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1893



BR 165 .M24 1893
McGiffert, Arthur Cushman,
1861-1933.
Primitive and Catholic
Christianity

PRIMITIVE AND CATHOLIC CHRISTIANITY

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED UPON THE OCCASION OF HIS INDUCTION INTO THE WASHBURN
PROFESSORSHIP OF CHURCH HISTORY IN THE UNION
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, NEW YORK,

BY THE

REV. ARTHUR CUSHMAN MCGIFFERT, PH. D., D. D.

TOGETHER WITH THE CHARGE ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

BY THE

REV. JAMES M. LUDLOW, D. D., L. H. D.

SEPTEMBER 28TH, 1893.

NEW YORK :
JOHN C. RANKIN CO., PRINTERS,
34 CORTLANDT STREET.
1893.



CHARGE TO PROF. MCGIFFERT

BY

JAMES M. LUDLOW, D. D., L. H. D.

MY DEAR BROTHER:—It does not seem to be according to the fitness of things that I should charge you regarding the duties of a Professor of Church History. The Directors of the Seminary have called you to this chair because they believe that, from your eminent attainments in this study and your successful career as a teacher of it, you yourself, perhaps, know more about such duties than any one else. A distinguished jurist, when asked why he seemed to enjoy the sermons of a certain illiterate preacher, replied that the preacher did not know enough to say anything beyond the commonplace, and he had observed that commonplace ideas were the most important. Now, my brother, if you will assume the attitude of that distinguished listener, we shall be on excellent terms, and I will speak freely.

I charge you to remember that you are to instruct in Church History bands of young men who are preparing themselves for the duties of the *active ministry*.

A Seminary professor is sometimes looked upon by the unknowing as a typical Protestant recluse. But I am sure that these hundreds of quick-brained young men, impatient of whatever does not help them on to their work, your associates in the Faculty, who are leaders in the highest and most practical

religious movements of our day, and, most of all, your own consecrated activity of mind and heart, will prevent your ever being regarded as such.

I can imagine that such a position as you will occupy here might suggest ambition to make for yourself a great repute for historical scholarship. Lay aside all anxiety about that. Your acquirements already, your ability, your habit of looking far beneath the surface of ordinary historical reading, will keep your light from under the bushel.

I imagine also that with your scholarly disposition you might be tempted to dive where your classes, who are only learning to swim, may be unable to follow. If so, please reserve your deep sea soundings for report in published volumes, and the archives of the learned societies, unless you can have a select class of those whom you are to make future professors. The ordinary student is not qualified for heavy research; but he is prepared to receive from such an instructor as you a fund of usable information, and a fascination with the study which will make the field of Church History a life-long delight and profit.

We install you to-day to be a practical trainer of these young men who are to go out to the common people and instruct them in the doctrine and precepts of Christ; and we commit to you particularly the duty of furnishing them that information which shall be most helpful to them, so far as it can be gathered from the history of the Church of Christ.

What is Church History? Luke says, at the opening of the Book of Acts, that his former treatise, covering the life-time of our Lord in the flesh, was of that "which Jesus *began* both to do and teach until the day in which he was taken up." Church History, then, is the continuation of that life of Christ as he is resident in his people through the Holy Ghost. Yet the study of Church History necessarily involves a great deal more than this. Though Christ's kingdom is not *of* the world, it has

had continual relation with the secular powers. Though it is "the pillar and ground of the truth," it has had to deal with errorists. Though it is pervaded with his Spirit, it has been tainted with much that is not of his Spirit, that is utterly human, not to say devilish. The Mississippi is mingled with waters which are not supplied from its springs; but the skillful pilot follows the channel: so it is the part of the wise student of Church History to mark the true course of that river of salvation as it flows, ever widening and deepening down through the ages.

Church History will exhibit the *development of true Christian doctrine*, the Christ thought; not the growth of its revelation, for that we believe was made complete in the New Testament, but its development in the conception of men. Christ's truth, as expressed in the Bible, is too great and subtle for any single generation, or any one stage of human education, to understand. The promise to "guide into all truth" has had, and is having, a progressive fulfillment. The grand theologians of the past, Augustine and the men of Nicæa, Calvin and the men of Westminster, were illumined, it may be, to the utmost of their capacity with the Light of the World, but their thoughts did not globe and bound that light; nor can this generation, with all the help it receives from the past, appreciate its full beauty and power. As a good instructor in Church History you will, then, not only enrich the minds of your students with the marvels of Christian thought gathered from the ages; you will, at the same time, impress them with the duty of great humility in their inheritance of the truth, since it can be but partial. Teach them, in the words of Jeremy Taylor, that "anything that is proud is against the form of sound words." Let them understand that the very essence of heresy is theological conceit.

Church History will not only show the development of the truth in the apprehension of the Church, it will furnish

warning of the many ways through which *good men have slipped into error*.

For instance, instead of the Spirit's guidance, as men have diligently compared Scripture with Scripture, there has at times floated before their ardent vision some spiritualistic fancy, some *ignis fatuus* of the soul-land, which has flashed its light upon detached portions of Scripture, leaving the rest in darkness. The readiness with which whole communities in different ages have followed such illusions will suggest to the student that the cause lies in human nature itself, and will put him on guard against the possibility of even Nineteenth Century superstition.

You will also show from abundant illustrations drawn from your field how easy it is for even wise men to adopt very *illogical inferences*, where prejudice, self-interest, the enthusiasm of controversy, the pride of partisanship, indeed any feeling that is not in keeping with that honesty of humility which befits the religious inquirer, prompts the argument.

You will also be able to convince your students that there is a *limit to the use of even good logic* in forming one's faith. Many mistakes have been made by projecting the conclusions of the reason—I use the word in its narrow sense—into realms where they may not apply. Engineers lay on the great plains of the West what they call bee-line railroads between towns; but if we should take such a line for astronomical direction, we would make a mistake, because the line has been gradually bending with the curve of the earth. It would not make a bee-line between the stars, but would complete a circle, and return to just where it started. So, much of the logic that is sufficient for earthly problems fails when applied to celestial truths. John Stuart Mill was not inclined to underrate the reason, but he confesses the danger of depending upon it alone, “without its natural complements and correctives,” the feelings and experiences. Fichte said that God was too great for

the mind to comprehend, we must therefore receive Him with the heart. Herbert Spencer, however much he may err in some respects, is impregnable in his proof that the problems relating to the infinite cannot be handled with logical certitude. When men who make the most of reason as their dependence confess its insufficiency, it would be well for the men of faith if they depended less upon it. Church History is the great field for illustration of the limit of the use of logic in dealing with the problems that relate to God and the soul. How many plausible systems have come up, variant, even contradictory, which cannot be punctured with a syllogism! Within our own Calvinism, how logic—at least that which professional logicians insist is infallible logic—has dwarfed the electing love of God into a semi-fatalistic dogma of Reprobation! Your students will be shown many men, of splendid intellect, who thought that they were weighing the verities of God, but who were really only like children tilting the end of a stone whose whole bulk is so great that no human enginery can lift it. They will learn to suspect all merely inferential theology, where it is not confirmed by indubitable Scripture, by sanctified experience, or by the consensus of the best of men.

The student of Church History will learn how easily Christ's truth may become *adulterated with the notions of men that already prevail* in a community or age; how hard it is to overcome the persistence of the cult. When the Jews were forced to recognize the truth of Christ they Judaized it, and put the new wine into their old bottles. When the Pagans were convinced by Christianity, they at once proceeded to Paganize it. The ancient schools of philosophy each tried to shape the new doctrine according to their preconceived principles, often almost destroying the diamond in making the facets. When they set the statue of St. Paul on the pedestal which had been used for the statue of Marcus Aurelius, they did a symbolical thing. But, as it was hard to keep the age thought

separate from the Christ thought, so it is difficult in reading Church History, especially of the great symbols, to separate from essential Christianity what the ages have contributed. This, it seems to me, is the most pressing demand upon historical criticism; for what the truth receives in the way of admixture from the passing ages it is apt to retain; it becomes sacred in the eyes of the unlearned as Tradition.

But I judge, my brother, from an incident which you will pardon me if I relate, that you will be a wise teacher in this respect. Some time ago I was conversing with a learned professor in one of our neighboring institutions. We were discussing professors—a very proper and profitable subject for free handling, you will admit. I inquired if there was in the country a man under fifty years of age who was qualified for the chair of Church History. He replied instantly and enthusiastically, Yes. But after a brief rhapsody on the scholarship and rare teaching ability of the man he had in mind, he qualified his praise by remarking that perhaps this professor had imbibed too much from his old preceptor, Harnack; that in studying the Creeds he made a great deal of the times in which they were written; that, for instance, instead of taking the Nicene Creed as a pure and simple deduction from Scripture, he would be apt to see the marks of the fourth century all over it, etc. I made a note of that young man, who, in the estimate of my friend, stood foremost as a scholar and teacher of Church History, and who insisted upon reading historical documents in the light of the history of their making; and when the occasion arrived I cast for him a hearty vote to fill this chair in Union Seminary.

But the study of Church History will not only suggest to the student the safe methods of dealing with religious truth, guarding him from the methods which have proved to be unsafe in the past; it will also enrich him with a *knowledge of Christian character*.

It has been said that it would take all the virtues of all the Christians that have ever lived, eliminating all their defects, to even approximate the character of the Lord himself. Each consecrated man can only exhibit the glory of the Spirit as it shines through the little rift of his peculiar life and circumstances. That is true; but through some of these little rifts have poured marvelous illuminations upon the dark ways of men. A distinguished painter recently sold, at a great price, a portfolio of his studies—mere studies, patches of color that he had caught from a sunset, trial groupings, experiments in form and vista. Art students knew their value; they could learn so much from the way the artist tried to perfect his art. Church History is a portfolio, filled with the finest attempts to express the beauty of the Christ character. What if none of them is perfect! What if some of them are very crude in respect to virtues for which their circumstances provided no training! That they were overtempted by the excitements, the follies, the superstitions of their age! What sweetness, what courage, what self-denial, what spiritual longing, what communings with the Master, had some men and women, thinking of whom in other respects we thank God that we are not such as they! Do you refuse to admire the cartoons of Raphael because they lack perspective? or Titian's coloring because he was deficient in anatomy? I cannot comprehend the state of mind that led a clergyman to say—if he has been rightly reported—that in drawing pulpit illustrations of character from Church History he never went back of the Reformation, unless he went to the times of the Apostles. This is to deprive our congregations of their inheritance in the lives and virtues of the saints of all ages. If any of the graduates of this Seminary have that purpose, I charge you, my brother, to see to it that the blame does not rest with you, in that you have not brought them into intellectual contact with the great hearts and pure souls of those, who, if they were not so wise as we in some matters of

modern discovery, yet adorned the Christianity of their age as, perhaps, we are not adorning ours, and have been received into heaven.

I have not time to speak, as I would like, of what may be learned from Church History of the *best methods of Christian work*. We need to learn from every possible field on this subject; for we are not doing Christ's work efficiently. We are not reaching the masses for whom He died. Indeed, are we intelligently trying to do so? The grand method is, of course, Christ's own method—life on life, and life for life. But that method is far from being common even with us ministers. We Protestants can go back even to Medieval times, and there learn much of how to work for Christ. Asia Minor, North Africa, the continent of Europe, were not won for Him through stupidity, through mistakes, through lethargy such as binds most of our communities. Surely no man is qualified for leadership in Christian work to-day who ignores the knowledge of the statecraft of the kingdom in the past.

My dear brother, I charge you to send these young men out from your room, and out into the world, feeling that they are not going alone; and that their comradeship is not limited to those who stand by their side in their own generation; but that they are the fighting line in a grand host that has conquered its way down through the centuries.

But I must not take time that belongs to you. I congratulate you, my brother, upon your election as Professor in Union Seminary. The air here is charged with stimulant to the highest scholarship and the deepest consecration. You will find here no restriction to the freedom of your study and speech, but such as you willingly put upon yourself when you took the oath of your office; an oath to be interpreted by no narrow ecclesiastical deliverance, but in the broad and catholic spirit with which the founders of the Presbyterian Church in the United States were accustomed to write and read such covenants.

I can wish you nothing better than that your labors in this chair may be as long continued, that you may have as much joy in your work, and win as much love and reverence from your students and the Church, as the Great Head of the Church has permitted to your honored predecessor—Dr. Philip Schaff.

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GENTLEMEN OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

It is with a deep sense of responsibility that I enter to-day upon the work to which you have called me, but it is with no feeling of sadness. I delight to be here at your bidding, and my mind dwells with eager anticipation upon the days of service which are now at hand. I have been long enough in my chosen work to realize all too well my own deficiencies, but I do not love that work the less; indeed, as the sense of its vastness has grown upon me I have given myself to it with an increasing joy of consecration; and that joy to-day is greatly enhanced, for I love and honor Union Seminary with the affectionate loyalty of a devoted son, and I know of no grander privilege than has now become mine. I do not enter lightly upon her service, for I know her high ideals and the degree to which those ideals have been realized, not only in other departments, but also in that in which it is to be my privilege to labor. The memory of Dr. Hitchcock and the living presence of Dr. Schaff almost overwhelm me as I think of all that that department has been in their hands. None can more fully realize it than those (and how many there were of us!) whose training in Church History began under the influence of Dr. Hitchcock's lectures and of Dr. Schaff's books. Were it the duty of the new incumbent of the chair of Church History to do what they have done he could not have summoned sufficient boldness to accept your call. But it is the privilege of those of us who are young to enter into the heritage of the fathers,

and it is our filial joy to carry on their work, even though we know all too well the imperfections that must attend our efforts.

But I have to-day a peculiar reason for gratitude, for it is my privilege to enjoy the welcome and to receive the benediction of my honored predecessor, who is at the same time my beloved teacher and friend. His untiring energy, his amazing acquisitions, his unswerving loyalty to truth, his broad sympathies, his quickness to appreciate the Christian spirit wherever found, will always be an incentive and an inspiration to his successor.

It adds not a little to my sense of responsibility, but it is a source of profound satisfaction, to find myself to-day associated as a colleague with so many of the honored instructors at whose feet I sat a learner, during three rich and memorable years. The confidence they have shown in me and the kind welcome they have accorded me are deeply appreciated. Relying upon their friendly sympathy and upon your kind indulgence I enter upon my work with a prayer for the blessing of Almighty God.

It becomes my duty at this time to address you upon some theme connected with the department of instruction to which I have been called. The theme that I have chosen may be styled

“PRIMITIVE AND CATHOLIC CHRISTIANITY.”

The subject of study in Church History, as in all the theological sciences, is Christianity itself. To contribute to a clearer and fuller understanding of Christianity I apprehend to be their common object, and the object is the same whether our purpose be scientific or practical; for an adequate knowledge of Christianity, of its nature, its spirit, its aims; the ability to distinguish between its essential and non-essential elements, between that in it which is of permanent and universal worth, and that which is of only temporary and local significance—all

this is of scientific interest and at the same time of the utmost practical importance. We study Christian History then—whether in the university or in the theological seminary, whether for purely scientific or for purely practical purposes—we study Christian History in order better to understand Christianity. This purpose we keep constantly in view ; in it we find our controlling principle, and we shape our method accordingly.

But the Christian Church, like every other organism, exists and has existed from the beginning, not in solitary isolation, but in the midst of an environment. It must, therefore, be an important part of the historian's task to study this environment and to determine its effect upon the organism—to determine in what respects and to what extent, if at all, it has affected or modified the Christian Church. It is conceivably possible, indeed, that the development which Christianity has undergone since the days of Christ has been the independent and exclusive unfolding of the original germ, and that the environment has meant nothing more than room to live and grow ; or it is possible, on the other hand, that in its growth it has assimilated and thus made its own many elements from without ; while it is still farther possible that Christianity in its present form contains foreign substances, which have never been and cannot be assimilated, which can never form a part of its life, but lie embedded in its structure or constitute excrescences upon its surface. It is the special task of the historian to discover by a careful study of Christianity at successive stages of its career whether it has undergone any transformations, and, if so, what those transformations are. It is his duty, if Christianity has assimilated any elements from without, or if it has received any artificial accretions, to trace those elements or accretions to their sources, to show when and how they became grafted upon or attached to the original stock. But the historian's work is not final. He is not called upon to pass

judgment upon those assimilations or accretions. He is not called upon to defend or to condemn them as consonant or dissonant with the essential character of Christianity. That is the theologian's work. The fact that any element of our system is of later growth than Christianity itself does not necessarily condemn it; nor even the fact that it is of foreign growth; but the discovery of the fact is sufficient to put such an element on trial. It must be required to vindicate its right to a place within the Christian system, and that it can do, not by appealing to its antiquity or to the universal favor which it has enjoyed—neither age nor general prevalence constitutes a guarantee of truth—but only by showing its vital relation to, or at least its harmony with, Christianity itself.

It has seemed to me not inappropriate that I should discuss on this occasion what I believe to be the most vital and far-reaching transformation that Christianity has ever undergone—a transformation, the effects of which the entire Christian Church still feels, and which has in my opinion done more than anything else to conceal Christianity's original form and to obscure its true character. I refer to the transformation of the primitive into the Catholic Church—a transformation which was practically complete before the end of the second century of the Church's life.

The significance of this transformation has not been always and everywhere realized. There are other and later changes, indeed, which impress the casual observer more forcibly, and seem to him more worthy of notice: the cessation of persecution with the accession of Constantine, and the subsequent union of Church and State; the preaching of Christianity to the barbarians of western and northern Europe; the development of the Greek patriarchate and of the Roman papacy; the formation of the elaborate liturgies of the Eastern and Western Churches; the rise of saint and image worship, of the confessional and of the mass; the growth of monasticism, which began with

renouncing the world and ended with subjugating it; the development of Nicene trinitarianism, of the Chalcedonian Christology, of the Augustinian anthropology and of the Anselmic theory of the atonement; many of these might seem at first sight of greater historical significance than any changes which took place during the first two centuries, and at least some of them have been apparently so regarded by Church historians, for they have supplied them with their principles of division, while the transformation to which I have referred—the transformation of the primitive into the Catholic Church, of the Church of the Apostles into that of the old Catholic fathers—has never been thought worthy of such special prominence. It is not my purpose in this address to trace that momentous transformation in all its features. I desire simply to point out and to explain, as fully as time will permit, the change of *spirit* which constitutes its essence.

The spirit of primitive Christianity is the spirit of religious individualism, based upon the felt presence of the Holy Ghost. It was the universal conviction of the primitive Church that every Christian believer enjoys the immediate presence of the Holy Spirit, through whom he communes with God, and receives illumination, inspiration and strength sufficient for his daily needs. The presence of the Spirit was realized by these primitive Christians in a most vivid way. It meant the power to work miracles, to speak with tongues, to utter prophecies (Cf. Mark xvi., 17-18, and Acts ii., 16, seq.). Their belief in it influenced all their living and thinking. They felt themselves to be sons of God, strangers and pilgrims upon the earth, citizens of a heavenly kingdom, which was soon to be revealed, and they lived accordingly; lived lives whose purity and holiness should befit their heavenly calling and destiny. The heavenliness, divineness, supernaturalness of the Christian life—the fact that it was lived with God and under his direct control—was to them its essential and distinctive feature. They

were bound to their Christian brethren by their common consciousness of the presence of the Divine, and by their possession of a common ideal and of a common hope. But there was no external bond of unity—except such as was supplied by their common forms of worship and by their meetings for mutual edification and comfort. The Church was not a visible institution of which the local congregations formed a part and to which all believers belonged. It was simply the “communion of saints,” holy because they were holy, enjoying the presence of the Spirit because composed of men in whom the Spirit dwelt. The Church had, in fact, no institutional character; it possessed nothing apart from its members. It did not constitute in any sense a channel of divine grace, nor was it, independently of them, a recipient or custodian of divine revelations. The only channel of divine grace was the Holy Spirit, and the only recipients and custodians of divine revelations were Christian believers. The phrase “Catholic Church,” which occurs very rarely in the period with which we are dealing, never in that period means what it came to mean before the close of the second century. It was used, if used at all, in early generations, only to express the unorganized sum of believers scattered over the whole earth. It gives utterance to the conception of their ideal unity, which was to be visibly realized only at the coming of the Kingdom of the Lord. “As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains and gathered together became one, so let thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into thy kingdom” runs the Eucharistic prayer in the *Didache*.

By the opening of the third century, all these conceptions had practically disappeared. The Church was no longer the mere totality of believers. It was the visible Kingdom of God—a concrete external organism, with a recognized constitution, and under the control of and dependent upon duly appointed and ordained officers, who were supposed to have received

from God in ordination a special official grace. As a divine institution, it was possessed of divine grace and empowered to dispense that grace to its members; as the exclusive custodian of divine revelation, it was its duty to declare God's will to them. Christians could no longer approach God directly and commune with him through the Holy Spirit; they could no longer receive revelations immediately from him, but they must look to the divinely appointed institution for guidance, for instruction, for all their spiritual blessings. Outside of it, indeed, salvation itself was impossible, for it was the exclusive channel of divine grace. It would be interesting to note the various doctrines that are implicitly involved, if not expressly avowed, in this theory of the Church: the nature of grace, the work of Christ, the conditions of salvation, the character and place of faith; but this is aside from my purpose. I desire simply to call attention to the new spirit which has taken the place of the old—the spirit of Catholicism, which means submission to an external authority in matters both of faith and of practice, and dependence upon an external source for all needed spiritual supplies.

To what was this change of spirit due? Under what conditions did the momentous transformation, which has been described, take place?

It is noticeable, first of all, that it did not synchronize with the passage of Christianity from the Jewish to the Gentile world. That change of environment, which Christianity underwent so early in its history, was, indeed, of vast consequence. In naturalizing itself on Gentile soil, the Christianity of the early Jewish disciples underwent certain modifications, which were of permanent significance. But with these modifications, important as they are for an understanding of the history of doctrine and of ethics, we are not here concerned. It is enough to point out the fact, that the spirit of religious individualism—the spirit, that is, of primitive Christianity—was as

marked a feature of early Gentile as of early Jewish Christianity. We have only to read Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians to form an idea of the extent to which it controlled the thought and life of that important Church.

Moreover, the change of spirit, with which we are concerned, did not come with the death of the Apostles and the close of the apostolic age. The Church of the first half of the second century believed itself to be just as truly under the immediate control of the Spirit as the Apostolic Church. There was the same consciousness of the possession of supernatural gifts, especially of the gift of prophecy; there was the same sense of heavenly citizenship; the same dependence upon divine guidance, and the same independence of an external organism. No line, in fact, was drawn between their own age and that of the Apostles by the Christians of the early second century. They were conscious of no loss, either of light or of power. Nothing is more surprising, to one who has been accustomed to think of the apostolic age as distinguished from all other ages by the evident presence of the Holy Spirit, than to read certain works of the fathers of the second century which take for granted the continued manifestations of that Spirit and speak familiarly of his revelation of himself in the words and deeds of the disciples. The names of many second century prophets have been handed down to us, and the author of the *Didache* has much to say about such prophets, who were evidently numerous in his day, while the Shepherd of Hermas claims to be itself a prophetic work, and its claims were recognized for some generations by the Church at large. If we to-day draw a line between the apostolic and post-apostolic ages, and emphasize the supernatural character of the former as distinguished from the latter, we do it solely on dogmatic, not on historical grounds. We may have *à priori* reasons—and they may be very good ones—for making such a distinction, but we can find no confirmation of it in our sources.

The change of spirit, then, which marks the rise of the Catholic Church took place not in the first but in the second century. What were its causes?

In general terms it may be said that it was the result at once of the secularization of the Church and of the effort of the Church itself to avoid such secularization.

The immediate danger confronting the Church upon its entrance into the world was that of absorption in the world, the loss of its distinctive character—of its spiritual and ethical power,—the disappearance of the broad line which separated it from the world and all its interests. This danger was keenly felt by many of the early Christians, and they struggled manfully against it. The believer's heavenly citizenship and destiny were constantly emphasized, and they daily reminded themselves and their brethren of the vanity of the present world and of the speedy coming of the Kingdom of the Lord. Thus the eschatological element is very prominent in the literature of the period. "Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness, looking for and honestly desiring the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?" are the words of II. Peter (iii., 11, 12); and the *Didache* is equally strenuous, beginning a long eschatological passage with the admonition: "Watch over your life. Let not your lamps be quenched, and let not your loins be unloosed, but be ye ready; for ye know not the hour in which our Lord comes" (xvi., 1). The Church felt, moreover, that it had especial reason to fear ethical deterioration and corruption, under the influence of the careless, pleasure-loving spirit and of the licentious habits of the communities in which it had its home. The duty of strict moral purity, and of serious attention to the higher interests of the soul, was therefore earnestly enforced, and the infant society felt itself obliged

to exercise watchful care over the manners and morals of its members. A peculiarly serious and earnest tone pervades all the early Christian documents that have come down to us, and in them all the ethical element is very marked. In thus emphasizing that element Christianity was true to its founder, for the preaching of Christ was, above all, ethical; the Sermon on the Mount strikes its key-note.*

But in the early second century danger began to threaten the Church from another quarter. Up to that time, though Christianity had secured some converts of considerable wealth and social distinction in Rome and doubtless elsewhere, it had succeeded in making little impression upon the more distinctly educated classes of society. But now it began to win its way gradually even among them, and the natural consequence was that its intellectual elements were emphasized as they had not been before.

Attention has been called in this connection to the speculative character of the Greek mind and to its contrast in that respect with the practical Hebrew mind, and it has been claimed that the speculative tendency which later controlled Christian theology was due to the conversion of the Greek world, was the result of the entrance into the Church of the Greek spirit. There is much truth in this claim, but discrimination is necessary. It is a fact that at the opening of the Christian era the Greek world was peculiarly, and to a degree not witnessed before or since, a philosophical world; not in the sense that there were great creative philosophers then at work as there had been in earlier centuries, but in the sense

* A difference, however, is to be noticed between the ethical ideal of Christ and that of many in the early Gentile Church. The active principle of love for God and man, which constituted the sum of all religion according to Christ, was still taught indeed, but in consequence of the conception of the immediate and constant presence of the Holy Spirit, and in opposition to the moral corruptness of the age, the element of personal holiness or purity naturally came more and more to the front, and increasingly obscured the fundamental principle of Christ. But this change of emphasis does not concern us here.

that all the educated world philosophized. But it is to be noticed that this was true only of the educated world, not of the common people, and thus we find that early Gentile Christianity is no more speculative in its character than early Jewish Christianity. Moreover, it is to be noticed that in the educated Greek world of the period with which we are dealing, two distinct philosophical tendencies may be clearly traced—the one ethical and practical, the other religious and speculative.

All the philosophy of the age was, indeed, largely religious in its character. But where the influence of Stoicism predominated the ethical element came to the front, and religion lost its independent significance, having no other value than to promote virtue by supplying it with a divine basis and sanction. Philosophers of this class were attracted by the lofty ethical ideals of Christianity and by the striking realization of those ideals in the lives of the Christians, and they came into the Church in large numbers during the second century. The tendency which they represented was in entire harmony with that of the Hebrew mind and of early Christianity in general. Their entrance into the Church did not mean at all the transformation of Christianity into a system of speculative philosophy. It meant continued and equally forceful emphasis upon the moral element in the Gospel, and the employment of philosophy in its service and for its sake alone. Justin Martyr is a case in point. His aim as a Christian philosopher was not speculative, but practical. He was attracted by the moral power of Christianity, and its religious character interested him only because it formed the basis of that power. Its superiority to all other systems of philosophy lay chiefly in the fact that it could appeal to a divine revelation for its moral sanctions.

The influence of such philosophers tended, indeed, to obscure the peculiar features of the Christian ethical ideal, to substitute the Stoic conception of rights and duties for the Christian

conception of self-denying love, but it did not tend to make Christianity less ethical. With such philosophers believers in general could have no quarrel; they found in them, indeed, their most powerful allies.

But there was another tendency which was growing ever stronger, and during the second century was more and more overshadowing the prevailing ethical tendency which has been described. This growing tendency was distinctly religious in its character. It had its roots in Platonism, and was fostered by the increasing sense of moral evil and by the influence of the various Oriental cults which began to be widely felt at this time. It was based upon an essential dualism between spirit and matter, between God and the world; and its great religious aim was the release of the spirit of man from the thralldom of the things of sense and his restoration to communion with the Divine; in other words, his redemption. Stress was laid, of course, upon conduct—but only as a means to an end. By asceticism—which constituted its sum—a man was to free himself as far as possible from the dominion of the physical, and thus contribute to his own redemption. The dualistic principles and the redemptive interest of this philosophy opened many cosmological and soteriological questions, and thus promoted speculation. Indeed, knowledge—the communion of the finite spirit with the infinite, through an acquaintance with his character and purposes—was universally regarded by thinkers of this school as a chief means of redemption. The speculative interest thus became very marked and in many cases seemed to overshadow the more immediately religious interest.

The general tendency which has been described bore fruit ultimately in Neo-Platonism; but before the rise of the eclectic system to which that name is given it had quite a history within the Christian Church. During the early second century many representatives of it, recognizing the redemptive element

in the Christian system, as preached by the Apostles, were attracted to Christianity, and finding in it, as they thought, the solution of all their cosmological and soteriological problems, they regarded it as the supreme revelation of God, and embraced it with eagerness and devoted themselves to its investigation and elucidation. By the application to the simple facts of Christian tradition of the allegorical method of interpretation, which was commonly in vogue in the philosophical schools of the day, they worked out an elaborate and profound system, in some respects the most remarkable the world has ever seen. These Gnostics, as they were commonly called, were the first Christian theologians in the strict sense—the first Christians to treat Christianity as a system of philosophical truth, and to make it as such the subject of special study. With their assumption that Christianity is a revelation from God, and hence contains truth which may properly be made the object of investigation, no Christian of that day would have quarreled. But with their emphasis of the intellectual at the expense of the ethical element little sympathy could be felt by the mass of Christians; and their theory that knowledge is a condition of salvation, upon which they based their claim to constitute a spiritual aristocracy among believers, and which logically leads to the exclusion of the ignorant and simple-minded from the number of the elect, of course must be repulsive to the common sentiment of the Church at large. Moreover, their treatment of Christianity gave rise to the fear that its distinctive features—its ethical and spiritual power—would be lost sight of in a maze of seemingly profitless speculations. (Cf. I. Tim., vi., 20.)

But the final rejection of Gnosticism by the Christian Church was not due to any of these considerations. The Church might ultimately have forgiven the Gnostics their peculiar methods, and might have compromised with their theory of the relation of knowledge to salvation. Indeed, this is practically what the Church did, when, later, it approved and adopted the specula-

tive theology of the great fathers and doctors. But the Church could not accept the Gnostics' dualism, which involved the impossibility of an immediate contact between God and matter, and hence meant a denial of the identity of the creating God—the God of the Jewish Scriptures—with the redeeming God—the Father of Jesus Christ—and the consequent rejection of those Scriptures and the destruction of the doctrine of Divine providence. From the very beginning, the Jewish Scriptures, to which Christ and his Apostles had so frequently appealed, had been appropriated by the Christian Church—the true Israel of God—and, interpreted in a Christian sense, had become to Gentile as well as to Jewish Christians the great apologetic weapon with which they were able to establish, at least to their own satisfaction, the divine origin of their religion, supernaturally prophesied and prefigured therein so long before the coming of the Christ. It is not surprising that the common Christian sentiment of the Church at large, of the educated as well as of the uneducated portion of it, should take offence at doctrines which involved the repudiation of those Scriptures, and which, moreover, made impossible a belief in Divine Providence, in a God ruling the kingdoms and peoples of this world for the advantage of the Church, with the purpose of bringing them all, sooner or later, into subjection to the visible kingdom of the Christ. The spirit of Gnosticism, it is true, lived on and finally won a permanent place within the Church; but the historic form in which it clothed itself in the early second century, the form to which we commonly confine the name, could not and did not find acceptance. The common instinct, if I may so call it, of the Church at large rebelled against it, and it was very widely felt that it must be distinctly and definitely repudiated. It was in the effort to repudiate it that steps were taken which resulted in the Catholic Church and in the permanent disappearance of the spirit of primitive Christianity.

These steps were three: first, the recognition of the teaching of the Apostles as the exclusive standard and norm of Christian truth; second, the confinement to a specific office (*viz.*, the Catholic office of bishop) of the power to determine what is the teaching of the Apostles; and third, the designation of a specific institution (*viz.*, the Catholic Church) as the sole channel of divine grace. These three steps need brief examination. And first the recognition of the teaching of the Apostles as the exclusive standard and norm of Christian truth. The Gnostics claimed apostolic authority for their doctrines, appealing not only to private and unrecorded traditions handed down from mouth to mouth, but also to writings of alleged apostolic origin. No one, of course, could question the truth of apostolic teaching, for the Apostles were universally recognized as the divinely commissioned and inspired founders of the Church. But, if this were the case, the Gnostics, whose theology was certainly false, must be in error in appealing to their authority. But how were they to be shown to be in error? In other words, how was the apostolic to be authoritatively determined, and determined so clearly and comprehensively as definitely to exclude the false doctrines of the Gnostics at every point? It was in seeking an answer to this question that the Church reached the conception of an authoritative apostolic Scripture canon and of an authoritative apostolic rule of faith.

The Gnostics were the first Christians to have a New Testament. The early Church needed no New Testament, for it had the Old which it interpreted in a Christian sense, and which, together with the commonly known facts of Christ's life, was sufficient for all purposes; especially since the Holy Spirit was in the Church imparting all needed truth and light. But the Gnostics repudiated the Jewish Scriptures and regarded Christianity as an entirely new and independent revelation, and hence they felt themselves impelled at an early date

to form a canon of their own, which should contain the teaching of Christ through his Apostles, which should, in other words, be apostolic. In opposition to them it was, of course, necessary for the Church to ask whether all that the Gnostics accepted was really apostolic, and thus it was led to gather into one whole all those writings which were commonly regarded as of apostolic origin; in other words, to form an authoritative and exclusive apostolic Scripture canon, which all who wished to be regarded as Christian disciples must acknowledge, and whose teachings they must accept. The exact extent of the canon, it is true, was not determined at once; uncertainty as to some books continued for many generations. But the conception of an apostolic Scripture canon had arisen, and the appeal to that canon had been widely made before the close of the second century.

But this apostolic canon lacked definiteness as a standard of doctrine, for, though it presented with great fullness the teaching of the Apostles, it was quite possible for the Gnostics, if they wished, to accept its statements and yet to read into them by the allegorical method of interpretation their own elaborate systems. Moreover, the books of the canon contained no concrete and explicit statement of the common faith of the Church which could be set over against the speculations of the Gnostics, and which they could be clearly seen to have contravened. Something still more definite was plainly needed, and that was found in the apostolic rule of faith. Already, as early as the middle of the second century, the Church of Rome had a baptismal confession, related to and resembling, though not identical with, our so-called Apostles' Creed. Two things are noticeable in connection with this Roman confession. In the first place, it is clearly an anti-Gnostic enlargement of the formula of baptism, into the names of the Father, Son and Spirit, which was in general, though not in universal, use in the early second century. Its evident anti-

Gnostic interest makes it plain that it was not formed until after the opening of the great conflict, that it was, in fact, one of the fruits of that conflict. In the second place, it contains no ethical element, but is a statement of belief pure and simple. This feature of it is a very striking one, for we know from other sources that during the early second century the instruction given to candidates for baptism and the conditions required of them were largely, if not exclusively, ethical. The Roman confession thus marks a change of emphasis which was due chiefly, no doubt, to the Gnostic conflict. The *Didache* is very instructive in this connection. Though it gives explicit directions in regard to the administration of baptism, it has nothing to say about a confession of faith, but requires the candidate to be instructed in the principles of Christian ethics and in the duties of the Christian life before receiving baptism. In fact, the word $\delta\iota\delta\alpha\chi\eta$, or teaching, as originally used, signified ethical, not doctrinal, instruction. It is true that, from the beginning, belief in one God and in Jesus Christ was demanded of all converts, but such belief was commonly taken for granted—the formula of baptism itself implied it—and all the emphasis was laid upon the ethical element.* But in opposition to Gnosticism the Christian congregations instinctively formulated those beliefs which had hitherto been taken for granted, and demanded of their converts explicit assent to them. Various local confessions thus grew up, but, based upon the common

* It is interesting to notice that Pliny, in his epistle to Trajan concerning the Christians, says nothing of a confession of faith, but that he speaks of the oath with which they bound themselves, "not with a view to the commission of some crime, but, on the contrary, that they would not commit theft, nor robbery, nor adultery, that they would not break faith, nor refuse to restore a deposit when asked for it." Compare also the Elkesaites' formula of baptism as reported by Hippolytus: "Behold, I call to witness the heaven and the water, and the holy spirits, and the angels of prayer, and the oil and the salt and the earth. I testify by these seven witnesses that I will no more sin, nor commit adultery, nor steal, nor be guilty of injustice, nor be covetous, nor be actuated by hatred, nor be scornful, nor will I take pleasure in any wicked deeds. Having uttered these words, let him be baptized in the name of the Mighty and Most High God."

baptismal formula and animated by a common anti-Gnostic interest, as they all were, they naturally resembled each other in their main features, however widely they differed in details. Before the end of the second century we find, for instance, in Irenæus and Tertullian, a distinct recognition of the existence of a rule of faith and emphasis upon its apostolic character. It is an authoritative standard, because it contains the teachings of the Apostles, and by it therefore all would-be Christian doctrines are to be tested. The conception of such an official standard, expressing the faith of the Catholic Church as distinguished from all heretical bodies, was practically universal soon after the opening of the third century; though it was only at a later period that any particular creed or confession gained œcumenical authority, only later that the Church at large had a definite rule of faith which was everywhere the same. When the apostolic Scripture canon had arisen, this rule of faith became, of course, a guide to its interpretation, but it is to be observed that the rule of faith was not derived from the New Testament. In fact, in form and substance it is older than the New Testament, though the conception of it as an official apostolic standard doubtless had its rise at about the same time as the latter, or even a little later. With the recognition of these two official standards—Scripture canon and rule of faith—the first step referred to above, the treatment of the teaching of the Apostles as the exclusive standard and norm of Christian truth, was complete.

But it will be evident at a glance that the step which was thus taken was of stupendous significance. Christians had, of course, always revered the Apostles and had looked upon them as divinely guided and inspired, and their teaching was consequently everywhere regarded as a *source* from which might be gained a knowledge of divine truth. But that is a very different thing from making the teaching of the Apostles

the sole *standard* of truth, a very different thing from ascribing to their teaching exclusive normative authority. The only authority which was recognized was the Holy Spirit, and he was supposed to speak to Christians of the second century as truly as he had ever spoken through the Apostles. Christian believers had, in fact, from the beginning—as has been already said—believed themselves in immediate contact with the Holy Spirit and had looked chiefly and directly to him for revelations of truth, as such truth might be needed. Now, under the stress of conflict, they resigned their lofty privileges and made the Apostles the sole recipients (under the new dispensation) of divine communications, and thus their teaching the only source (the Old Testament, of course, excepted) for a knowledge of Christian truth, and the sole standard and norm of such truth. The consequences of the step which has been described were many and momentous. It is enough here to call attention to the fact that to it is due the pernicious notion that apostolic authority is necessary for every element of the Christian system, and the consequent practice—which was for centuries universal and is still too widely prevalent—of carrying back all the doctrines, institutions and usages, which we ourselves accept, into the apostolic age in order to find confirmation of them there. To it is also due the fusion of the Apostles into one composite whole, and the consequent loss of a sense of their individuality, which has lasted so long that even to-day the scholar becomes an object of suspicion in many quarters, who ventures to treat them as historic figures and to exhibit their teachings in historic relation to their characters and lives. To it is largely due, on the other hand, much of the knowledge of the apostolic age which we possess, for had the original conception of continuing divine revelations been retained, there would have seemed little reason for preserving apostolic writings and traditions.

The rise of the apostolic Scripture canon and of the apostolic rule of faith has been traced, but the process did not stop

here. It was soon seen that even the rule of faith—definite as it is—was inadequate to the emergency in which Christians found themselves. For it was possible, as it transpired, to interpret even this brief and seemingly explicit confession in more than one way. Moreover, the Gnostics could and did question its apostolic origin, calling attention to the fact that it was nowhere to be found in the extant writings of the Apostles, and that the Church possessed no guarantee of its correct transmission. In reply to this objection it was claimed that the Apostles had founded certain churches and that in them their teaching must be preserved in its purest form. But such an assumption was of little value, until a dogmatic basis was found for it in the theory that the bishops of such churches had received from God through the agency of the Apostles—who had appointed and ordained them—an official grace which enabled them to preserve and to transmit without error the teaching of the Apostles committed to them. They thus became vouchers for the genuineness of the Church's creed and for its correct transmission. Moreover, since the teaching of the Apostles handed down to them must include also the Apostles' interpretation of that teaching, they became at the same time the authoritative expounders of the Church's creed. The extension of the prerogatives of the bishops of certain churches to the bishops of all churches, followed very speedily and as a matter of course. The great œcumenical councils, in which speaks the voice of the collective episcopate, were one of its results. But that is a matter of minor concern. I am interested here only to call attention to the fact that the Church was now in possession not only of an authoritative apostolic doctrine, but also of a permanent apostolic office, whose existence insures at all times the accurate transmission and the infallible interpretation of that doctrine. It will be noticed that the decisive quality of this office, as of the New Testament canon and the rule of faith, is its apostolicity. The

episcopate is not a channel for the reception of new revelations from God, but only for the transmission of revelations received by the Apostles. The first step was to recognize the exclusive authority of apostolic teaching, the next was to confine to a particular office the power to transmit and to interpret that teaching. The believer was thus permanently denied not only the privilege of receiving divine revelations, but also the right to interpret for himself the revelations received and transmitted by the Apostles.

But there remained to be taken a final step. In order to be saved it was already necessary to accept and to recognize the normative authority of the doctrines of the Apostles, as contained in the New Testament canon and in the rule of faith, and as interpreted by the Catholic Church through her bishops. But one might do this—might be in his beliefs entirely in accord with the doctrinal position of the Church as thus defined—and yet remain without the Catholic Church, yet receive saving grace directly from God, and thus, at least, his ultimate spiritual right as a child of God be preserved. But in the end the Catholic Church denied him even that. In the end membership in that Church was insisted upon as essential to salvation. The grounds of this final step may be very briefly stated. In the beginning, the basis of the unity of the Church was found in the possession of the Holy Spirit. The Church was one because all its members possessed one Spirit. The Church, as distinct from its members, did not possess the Spirit; indeed, the Church possessed nothing independently of them. But, in connection with the process which has been described, the idea gained prevalence that the special work of the Apostles, as the founders of the Church, had been to transmit a deposit of truth which they had received from Christ, and in the possession of that truth consequently the unity of the Church was increasingly thought to consist. But that truth had been transmitted, not to individual believers, but only to the official successors of the

Apostles—to the bishops of a particular institution. The unity of the Church was therefore realized, not in the possession of the transmitted deposit of truth by its members in general, or by any particular class of them as such, but in the possession of that truth by its officers as officers. Their official character, of course, necessarily involved the Church's institutional character; and thus the Church, as an institution, possessed something which it did not owe to its members. As an institution, with an apostolic office, it now had an independent value of its own. As its bishops constituted the sole depository of apostolic truth, without which truth there is no Church, it must be the only Church. A person outside of its communion, therefore, could not be a member of the Church of Christ. But from the beginning the Church of Christ, *i. e.*, Christian believers, had been regarded as the exclusive sphere of the Spirit's action; only to that Church, *i. e.*, only to Christian believers, had the Spirit's presence been promised by Christ. Now that the visible institution, as an institution, had taken the place of believers as such, the Spirit acted only in that institution; and hence salvation, which, of course, depends upon the possession of the Spirit, was possible only within the Catholic Church.

But this means that the Church which has hitherto been a community of saints, all of whose members are holy, must now become an ark of salvation—a *corpus permixtum*—containing both saints and sinners; for to exclude from its privileges any one who may desire to enjoy them is to deprive him not of the certainty, as heretofore, but of the possibility of salvation. The result must, of course, be a relaxation of the Church's principles and methods of discipline—a relaxation which was first distinctly avowed by Bishop Callixtus, of Rome (217-222). The process I have been tracing—the process which led to the belief that there is no salvation without the Catholic Church—is a purely logical one. But it was promoted by the natural

and increasing tendency toward consolidation, which was especially marked in the late second century, the tendency, that is, to lay emphasis upon the external and visible unity of believers. A unity of spirit naturally strives to express itself in the form of a visible bond, and in the case of the Christian Church the tendency toward such expression was enhanced by constant intercourse between distant churches, by the pressure of the state and by the desire to withstand the disintegrating effects of heresy.

When the last of the three steps described had been taken—when a visible institution had become the exclusive channel of divine grace—the Catholic Church was complete. But it must be remarked that none of the steps which we have traced could have been taken, had not the conflict which resulted in them been preceded by a partial loss of the original consciousness of the immediate presence of the Holy Spirit. The assumption by the Church of spiritual privileges which had originally belonged to all believers, took place only when the consciousness of possessing those privileges had become less general than it had once been. It is not surprising that it should have grown less general, for as time passed the number became constantly greater of those who were Christians chiefly because they were born of Christian parents, and as the Church grew stronger and more conspicuous, half-hearted and worldly-minded converts were increasingly attracted to it. But the primitive spirit continued fresh and vivid in many quarters, and finally asserted itself, though in perverted form and not without the admixture of fanaticism, in the movement known as Montanism. That movement was in essence simply the endeavor of Christians who believed themselves to be still in possession of the Holy Spirit, to resist the spoliation of their spiritual rights. The vigor of the movement and the wide favor with which it met prove incontrovertibly that the spirit of primitive Christianity was by no means extinct. But the

Church at large had too widely lost that spirit and had felt too keenly in its strife with Gnosticism the need of definite standards and of a compact organization, to be able to accept the Montanists' doctrine of continuing divine revelations, and to be willing to recognize the authority and to follow the guidance of their alleged God-inspired prophets. The result was the final exclusion of the Montanists from the Catholic Church, and in opposition to them increasing emphasis upon the very process against which they had rebelled. The final victory of the spirit of Catholicism over the primitive spirit, which in Montanism had made a last desperate effort to avoid annihilation, marks the secularization of the Christian Church. That secularization was not due, as has been so widely thought, to the favors shown the Church by the Emperor Constantine, or to the ultimate union of Church and state. The Church was in principle secularized as completely as it ever was long before the birth of Constantine. The union of Church and state was but a ratification of a process already complete, and is itself of minor significance. At the close of the conflict with Montanism, the Church, instead of being an ideal unity of saints, whose citizenship is in heaven alone, had become a visible institution, embracing both saints and sinners, both the heavenly and worldly-minded; had become, in fact, an institution not only *in* but largely *of* the world. Its forms of government were the forms of the world in which it dwelt; it was controlled by human leaders; its members were subject to human authority. There was still, to be sure, a theory of divine control and guidance, but the divine element had been so minimized by the arbitrary limitation of its channel of operation and of its sphere of action that immediate consciousness of it was largely lost and its influence practically annulled. The secularization of the Church was evidently largely due—as remarked in the beginning—to its own effort to avoid secularization. It found no better way to repel the influ-

ence of a false philosophy than to empty itself of its spiritual heritage, denude itself of its spiritual power, and do battle in worldly armor. It won its victory, but it paid dearly for it, and it was, at best, but a partial triumph.*

I shall hardly excite surprise after all that has been said if I declare my dissatisfaction with the prevalent divisions of Church History. The epoch marked by the rise of the Catholic Church has been employed in recent years to divide the history of doctrine into two great periods: its rise and its development. And this division has already proved very fruitful, and has materially contributed to a right understanding of the subject. I am convinced that the epoch in question is just as decisive for the history of the Church as for the history of doctrine, and I venture to think that the emphasis of the process which we have been considering, that would result from the general employment of that epoch in the treatment of Church History, would do much to clarify our conception both of the nature of Christianity and of the character of its development. I have rejoiced to see, since my own opinions on this subject were formed, that in at least two recent Church histories, the epoch of which I speak has been given partial recognition, being made to mark a subordinate division in the history of the ancient Church.† But that is not enough; for

* I would not be misunderstood. It is not my intention to pass condemnation upon the Catholic Church, whether in its early undivided state, or in its Greek or Latin form. The Holy Spirit has revealed himself in the past and still reveals himself to the members of that Church, if they keep themselves in touch with him, as truly as to members of the primitive Church. Indeed the Holy Spirit has doubtless spoken in the past and still speaks in and through the Catholic Church, as we believe that he has spoken in the past and still speaks in and through other communions of the one great Church of Christ. All I have desired to do in this connection is to point out the difference between the spirit of primitive and the spirit of Catholic Christianity, and to call attention to the fact that the growth of the latter, though it does not prevent, does hinder, the free action of the Spirit of God in the hearts and upon the minds of Christian men, and to that degree marks the secularization of the Church.

† I refer to the admirable histories of Moeller and Müller.

the epoch in question marks itself the close of ancient Church History—the close of the history of primitive Christianity. Between that day and this the Catholic Church has known no epoch of commensurate importance. That Church, indeed, is still living in the period which opened then; it has had no modern age. With the Reformation, when the Catholic principle was definitely rejected, a new age opened for a part of the Church of Christ, but only for a part. The history of Protestantism, therefore, rightly constitutes a third division; but to make the Reformation mark the beginning of a new age in the history of the Catholic Church is, as Protestants, to arrogate to our own faith a degree of influence which it has unfortunately never possessed. It may be claimed that convenience justifies the ordinary divisions, and that it justifies the separation of the history of the Catholic Church (at least of the Roman Catholic Church) since the Reformation from its history before that time, but this I can no longer believe, for convenience has no right to dictate a method of treatment which does violence to the subject treated and obscures its true character. I venture to think, indeed, that the division suggested—the division into the primitive, the Catholic, and the Protestant Church—will prove not only more logical than any other, but equally convenient.

It may seem that I am using the term *Catholic* in too narrow a sense when I thus distinguish the Catholic Church from the primitive Church on the one hand, and from the Protestant Church on the other; and I may be reminded that we Protestants regard ourselves as a part of the Catholic Church when we give utterance in the Apostles' Creed to our belief in the "Holy Catholic Church." But the phrase "Catholic Church" has two radically different senses, the one inclusive, the other exclusive; and I have purposely employed it throughout this address in the latter sense alone. Much confusion has resulted from the fact that a double meaning thus attaches to the word

Catholic, and from the failure to keep its two meanings distinct. Originally, as was remarked above, the phrase "Catholic Church" meant simply the Church universal—the totality of believers—and in that sense we too, who are Protestants, are members of the Holy Catholic Church, and God grant that we may ever be! But early in the third century the phrase acquired another and exclusive sense which soon became technical, and which has attached to it ever since. In this, its technical sense, it denotes not the Church universal, but the particular visible institution whose rise I have endeavored to trace—an institution claiming to be the orthodox Apostolic Church and the exclusive channel of divine grace, and as such arrogating to itself the title of "universal Church," and distinguishing itself from all other bodies of Christians, which are pronounced by it, because without its pale, schismatical and alien from the household of faith. The Greek and Roman Catholic Churches are but localizations of this one Catholic Church which existed in its undivided form for some centuries before their separation. The term *Catholic*, therefore, in the narrow technical sense described, applies equally to the undivided Church of the third and subsequent centuries and to the Greek and Roman Churches since their separation.*

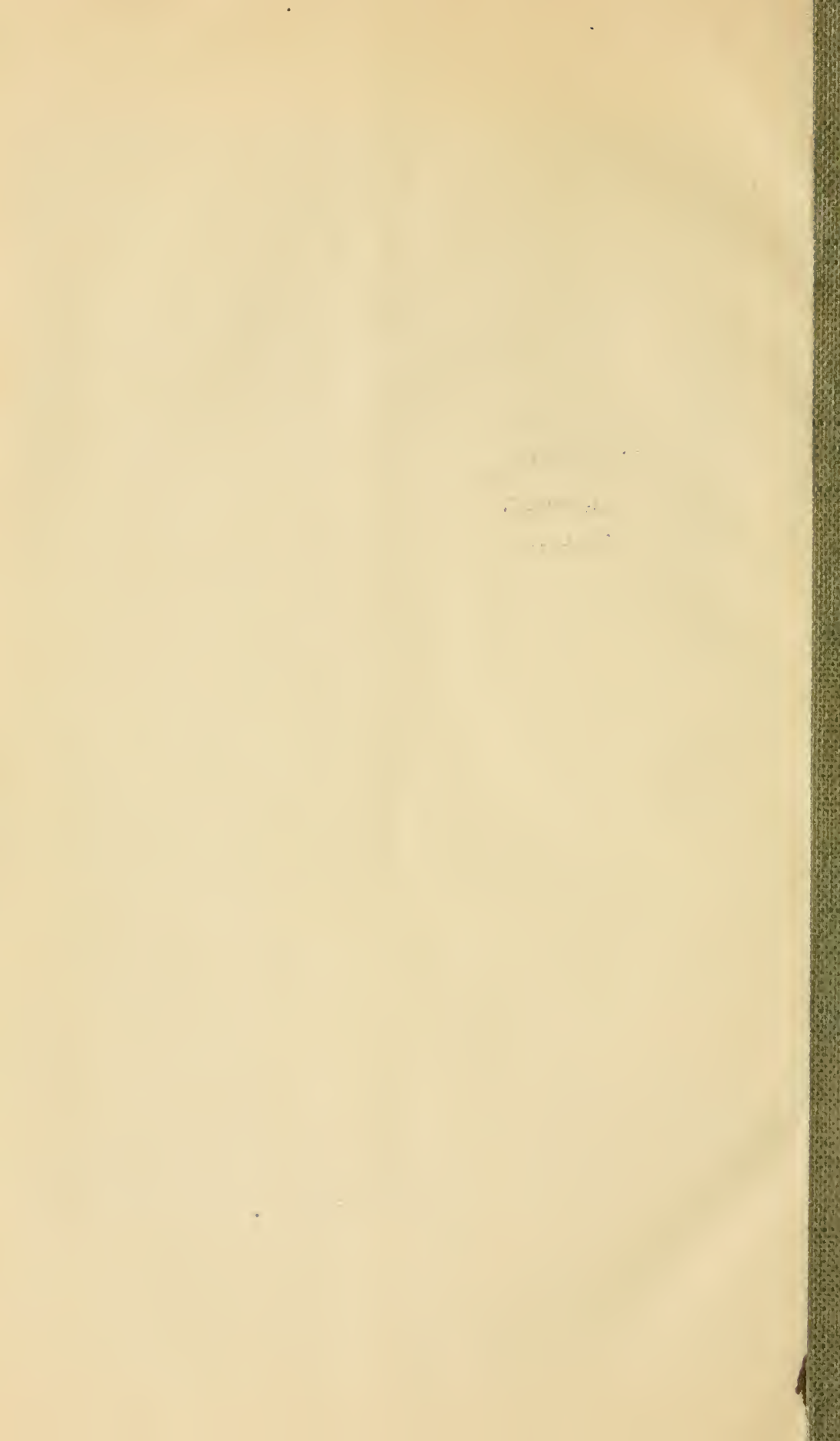
* It is interesting to note that the word *catholic* did not occur in the old Roman symbol which formed the basis of our Apostles' Creed. In that symbol the phrase "Holy Church" was used where the later creed has "Holy *Catholic* Church." The word *catholic* did not become a part of the creed until the fifth century, and bore from the beginning the exclusive and technical sense which has been defined. Historically, therefore, the phrase "Holy Catholic Church" in the Apostles' Creed does not mean the Church universal, but a visible institution claiming for itself apostolicity and orthodoxy as distinguished from all schismatic and heretical bodies. It is true that this exclusive Church claimed to be universal, but it could do so only by denying the Christianity of all other Christian communions, whose membership was by no means insignificant during early centuries.

Luther allowed the phrase *sanctam ecclesiam catholicam* to stand in the Latin creed, but repudiated its historic interpretation and gave to the adjective *catholica* the primitive sense of *general* or *universal*. In his German version of the creed (in agreement with some mediæval recensions of the symbol) he substituted the word *Christian* for *Catholic*, rendering the phrase "eine heilige christliche Kirche," in which change he has been followed by the Lutheran Church.

We have studied together, for a little, the most momentous transformation that the Church has ever undergone, and our study cannot have failed to make it clear that the effects of that transformation are still felt, not only in the Catholic, but also in the Protestant Church. The Protestant Reformation was a revival of the spirit of primitive Christianity, but elements of Catholicism were retained which materially modified the forms of that spirit's expression, and which have served to make the Protestant a different thing from the primitive church. Must these elements, then, be necessarily rejected? Must Protestantism, without more ado, cast them all off and return to the simplicity of the primitive Church? To maintain this would be to misread history's lessons; for if the study of the history of the Church teaches anything, it is the transforming power of the Christian spirit, its power to put its own stamp upon, to mould into its own likeness, elements even of late and foreign origin. By the degree to which they give expression to that spirit is the value of such elements, and of all elements, to be measured. If they contribute to its clear, and just, and full expression, they vindicate their right to a place within the Christian system; if they hinder that spirit's action, they must be condemned.

The Protestant Reformation was, indeed, a revival of the spirit of primitive Christianity, for it restored to the individual believer those spiritual rights of which the Catholic Church had largely deprived him, and made the Holy Spirit, which voices itself both in the teaching of the Apostles and in the enlightened Christian consciousness of true believers, the only source and standard of spiritual truth. But Protestantism did not repudiate, it retained the Catholic conception of an apostolic Scripture canon—a conception which the primitive Church had entirely lacked. That conception, however, was no longer what it had been in the Catholic Church, for it was brought by the reformers into harmony with the primitive conception

of the continued action of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of true believers. This fact alone it is which can justify Protestants in retaining the Scriptures as a rule of faith and practice while rejecting the Catholics' appeal to ecclesiastical tradition. The true statement of the Protestant position is not that the Word of God, contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, but that the Spirit of God is the sole and ultimate authority for Christian truth—the Spirit of God who spoke through the Apostles and who still speaks to his people. It is agreed, indeed, that the voice of that Spirit must accord always with itself; and hence, though it may indicate to the heart of the believer that this or that which has been commonly regarded as apostolic is not really so, it cannot contradict the genuine teaching of the Apostles, who, according to the Reformers, enjoyed that Spirit's presence in abounding measure. Thus Protestantism, while remaining true to the Christian spirit which had voiced itself in the primitive Church, adopted a regulative principle which that Church had lacked; and it may thus be held to mark a real advance, for in it, as nowhere else, the essential spirit of Christianity may find, and has at times, without doubt, found, not only free, but also clear and just expression.



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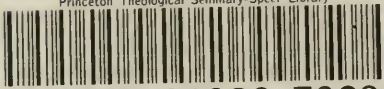
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