

Saint Raymund Nonnatus

Cardinal and Confessor

By a Catholic Midwife.

Catholic Truth Society of Ireland No.bh373a (1947)

His Feast Day is August 31 and he is patron of midwives, childbirth, pregnant women and caesarian births.

ACCORDING to the words of our divine Redeemer, that Christian proves himself His most faithful disciple and gives the surest and greatest proof of his love of God, who most perfectly loves his neighbour for God's sake. By this test of sanctity, we are to form our judgement of the saint whom the Church honours on this day, August 31. Saint Raymund (or Raymond) was brought into the world at Portello in Catalonia in the year 1204, and was called non natus, "not born", because he was taken out of the body of his mother after her death in labour.

In his childhood, he seemed to find no other pleasure than in his devotions and his grammar studies. His father took him from school, and sent him to take care of a farm, which he had in the country. Raymund readily obeyed, and enjoyed the opportunity of solitude. He was pressed by his friends to go to the court of Aragon, where by his prudence and abilities he could not fail to better himself, especially as he was related to the illustrious houses of Foix and Cardona. Instead of doing this, he made a resolution of taking the religious habit in the new order of Our Lady of Mercy (the Mercedarian order) for the redemption of captives. He could say with holy Job that compassion for the poor and distressed had grown up with him from his childhood. The sufferings of the Christians, who in the neighbouring provinces, almost under his eyes, groaned in slavery under the Moors, particularly afflicted his heart; by compassion, he already bore their burdens and felt the weight of their chains. But if he was moved at their bodily sufferings, and desired to devote himself and all that he possessed to procure them comfort and relief, he was much more troubled by their spiritual danger of sinking under their calamities and losing their souls by impatience or apostasy from Christ. Against this he never ceased to pray, entreating the God of mercy to be Himself the comfort and support of the weak and of the strong; and he wished with Saint Paul to spend and be spent himself for their souls.

He obtained of his father, through the mediation of the Count of Cardona, leave to enter the Mercedarian order; and was accordingly admitted to his profession at Barcelona by Saint Peter Nolasco.

So swift was the progress that he made in the perfection of his institute that within two or three years after his profession, he was judged the best qualified to discharge the office of 'Ransomer', in which he succeeded Saint Peter. Being sent into Barbary (the Barbary Coast of modern Algeria) with a considerable sum of money, he purchased at Algiers the liberty of a number of slaves. When all other resources were exhausted, he voluntarily gave himself up as a hostage for the ransom of certain others, whose situation was desperate and whose faith was exposed to imminent danger. The

sacrifice that the saint had made of his own liberty served only to exasperate the Algerians, who treated him with barbarity till, fearing lest if he died in their hands they would lose the ransom which was stipulated to be paid for the slaves for whom he remained a hostage, the magistrate of the city gave orders that he should be treated with more humanity.

He was permitted to go about the streets and he made use of this liberty to comfort and encourage the Christians, and he converted and baptized some Mohammedans. When the governor heard of this, he condemned him to be impaled, this being a barbarous manner of executing criminals much in use among those infidels. However, the persons who were interested in the ransom of the captives prevailed that his life should be spared lest they should be losers; and, by a commutation of his punishment, he was made to run the gauntlet. This did not daunt his courage. So long as he saw souls in danger, he thought he had yet done nothing; nor could he let slip any opportunity of ministering to them. He considered that, as Saint John Chrysostom says, "Though a person shall have given away a large fortune in alms, he has done nothing equal to him who has contributed to the salvation of a soul. This is a greater alms than ten thousand pounds — than this whole world, how great so-ever it appears to the eye — for a man is more precious than the whole world." Saint Raymund had, on one side, no more money to employ in releasing poor captives; and, on the other, to speak to a Mohammedan upon the subject of religion was by the Islamic law to court death. He could, however, still exert his endeavours with hope of some success or of dying a martyr of charity. He therefore resumed his former method of instructing and exhorting both Christians and infidels.

The governor, who was immediately told of his behaviour, was enraged and commanded the servant of Christ to be whipped at the corners of all the streets in the city, his lips to be bored with a red-hot iron in the market-place, and his mouth shut up with a padlock, the key of which he kept himself and only gave to the gaoler when the prisoner was to eat. In this condition, he was kept in a dungeon, where he lay full eight months, till his ransom was brought by some religious men of his order, who were sent with it by Saint Peter.

Raymund was unwilling to leave the country of the infidels, where he wanted to remain to assist the slaves; but he acquiesced in obedience to the orders of his general, begging God to accept his tears, seeing he was not worthy to shed his blood for the souls of his neighbours.

Upon his return to Spain in 1239, Pope Gregory IX nominated him cardinal. But so little was he affected by the unlooked-for honour that he neither changed his dress, nor his poor cell in the convent at Barcelona, nor his manner of living. The Pope, being desirous to have so holy a man about his person and to employ him in the public affairs of the Church, called him to Rome. He obeyed, but could not be persuaded to travel otherwise than as a poor religious. He got no farther than Cardona (Cerdagne), which is only six miles from Barcelona; he was seized with a violent fever and died there, being only about thirty-six years old. He was buried in the chapel of Saint Nicholas, near the farm in which he had formerly lived at Portello. The life of Saint Raymund Nonnatus was not written down till some hundreds of years after his death, and it is a task of great difficulty to separate truth from fiction in the document that has come down to us; it is adorned with numerous miracles and other marvels of very doubtful worth. He is the patron saint of midwives.

Raymund gave not only his substance but also his liberty, and exposed himself to cruel torments and death, for the redemption of captives and the salvation of souls. But how cold is charity in our breasts, though it be the essential characteristic of true Christians. Do we not, merely to gratify our desire for pleasure or out of vanity or avarice, refuse to give the superfluous part of our possessions

to the poor, who for want of it suffer from cold and hunger? Are not we slothful and backward in visiting unfortunate or sick persons, and in doing our best to get some relief for the distressed? Are we not so insensible to their miseries as to be without feeling for them, and to neglect even to commend them to God with sufficient earnestness? Do we not fail to remonstrate with sinners according to our circumstances and with regard for prudence, and neglect to instruct, by ourselves and others, those under our care? Is it not manifest that self-love, and not the love of God and our neighbour, reigns in our hearts, when we pursue so inordinately our own worldly interest? If we sound our own hearts and take an impartial view of our lives we shall soon know whether this test of Christ, or that of Satan, which is self-love, be uppermost in our souls, and the governing principle of our actions.

Saint Raymund Nonnatus, Pray for us.

Saint Raymund tried his best to convince his Muslim listeners that not only was Our Lord Jesus Christ a great prophet, as they were already convinced, but that he also was in very fact true God and true man. Therefore, they should, he argued, belong to that saving community, the Church, the Catholic Church, which Our Lord had left behind as the vessel in which we could safely travel to reach the salvation and eternal bliss of the Kingdom of Heaven. He urged them to explore the authentic eye-witness accounts of the teachings of Our Lord which had been unerringly handed down through the Church and which are known as the Gospels. Fittingly, then, let us conclude our examination of his life with some reflections of a twentieth century defender of Catholic Truth. Let us investigate some

QUESTIONS ABOUT the Truth of Catholic Christianity.

Questions addressed to a Catholic Priest. From "Radio Replies".

By Rev Dr Leslie Rumble, M.S.C.

Truth of Christianity.

Most people who are Christians cannot give a valid reason for their faith. Will you give me a valid reason for your faith?

Yes. Historically, it is certain that Christ really lived, really claimed to be God, proved that claim by His supreme command over the laws of nature established by God, taught the Christian religion, and obliged man to accept that religion. Philosophically, Christianity alone gives an adequate solution and explanation of the origin, condition, and purpose of the human race. Religiously, it infinitely surpasses all other forms of religion, and alone completely responds to the innate religious tendencies of man. Theologically, I am a Christian because God has given me the grace to perceive the truth of Christianity, and to embrace it. Morally, I am obliged in strict justice to accept a religion specified and imposed by Almighty God.

Christ did not intend His religion for you. He intended it for the Jews only.

Christ was fully aware of the prophecy of Isaiah 2:2-3, that all nations would be called to His Church. He did intend that His doctrines should be preached to the Jews first, and only afterwards to the Gentiles, and for this reason He told His disciples not to preach it to the Gentiles during the period reserved to the Jews. But in Saint Matthew 28:19, Christ Himself tells the Apostles to "Go, teach all nations."

If acceptance of Christianity be necessary for salvation, what of those who lived before Christ?

The merits and grace of Christ were applied by God to men of goodwill in anticipation of His death on the Cross. God, in His eternity, is not conditioned by time, and men could benefit by the death of Christ just as they can make use of an inheritance which is absolutely certain to be given to them in due time. The merits of Christ were applied to Jews of goodwill in virtue of their faith in a Redeemer to come. Those who through no fault of their own did not know of a Redeemer to come were saved if they obeyed the natural dictates of their conscience, and repented of their failings. Every single human being has the moral standard that what is apprehended to be morally good must be done, whilst moral evil must be avoided.

If Christianity taught people to be so good, why did the early Christians meet with nothing but persecution?

The more evil a man is, the more he resents the goodness of others. Every good man is a living condemnation of the conduct of evil men. The Jews could not point to a single sin in Christ, yet they crucified Him. And Christ said, "The servant is not above his master. As they have persecuted Me, they will persecute you." The quickest road to unpopularity is to refuse to do evil with the majority. The world has no hatred of its own, but the enemies of worldliness it hates. The early Jews and Romans hated Christianity, for both peoples feared that it would interfere with their comfort. Today the Catholic Church enjoys this inheritance of antagonism, as does no other religion.

Does not Christianity today differ vastly from the religion Christ preached?

Outside the Catholic Church, yes. But in the Catholic Church the exact religion of Christ has come down to us in virtue of Christ's promise to be with His Church all days till the end of the world. This assertion will be justified in a later section. (See <http://www.radioreplies.info/radio-replies-vol-1.php>)

Have not downright absurdities been tagged on to the teachings of Jesus?

They have — but not by the Catholic Church. And remember that greater absurdities still have been put forward by pretended human reasoning.

Early Christianity boasted many miracles; Christianity can boast none today!

God has never ceased to perform miracles in favor of true Christianity, but it is not necessary that so many should occur today. More frequent miracles were necessary in the early Church to secure its rapid propagation. But the Catholic Church is now firmly established. Read a little history, note all the forces employed against the Church during the centuries, and then tell me whether it is not a standing miracle to find that Church still existing with undiminished vitality and able to claim over 400 million adherents in 1940.[In 2014 the figure stands at 1.3 billion.] On this subject of miracles, also, consult Nos. 95-103 at <http://www.radioreplies.info/radio-replies-vol-1.php>.

Would you say that the world has benefited by Christianity?

Yes. It has benefited in a thousand different ways. Christianity has elevated men's thoughts to a higher level, directed men's wills to a greater good, and has indirectly affected their well-being even in this world in almost every department of life. If the world is less happy today than in years past, it is because, whilst many men still profess to be Christian, they are less willing to behave as Christians and to put their principles into practice. Christianity does not force men to be good in spite of themselves. But if men can be really miserable only by forsaking Christian principles, it

shows that Christianity practiced is very likely the one true remedy. Let all men live up to Christian principles, and then if the world is not better, you can blame Christianity.

Christian Churches are everywhere, yet misery and distress get worse all over the world!

The growth of misery and distress is not due to the multiplication of Churches. Many professing Christian Churches, of course, do not stand firmly for the true principles of Christ. And even the growth of the Catholic Church cannot influence much those who will not submit to her laws. As the Church grows, so does population, and with population, evil practices. Man is endowed with intelligence, and this gives him an uncanny power of inventing new modes of iniquity, which animals could not suspect. Thus, we have a rotten Press, the propagation of birth-control, abortion, pornography, Godless education, and what-not. The mystery is, not that we have so many troubles, but that the distress is not greater than it is. We can account for it only by God's mercy, and by the fact that the Church does make some reparation to Him in the name of mankind. If mankind got all it really deserves, you would have something to write about! Another little matter to remember is that Christianity is not to rid the world of trouble and distress, but to save souls from having to endure these things in the next life. Christianity enables people to bear gladly those sufferings, which are permitted by God for their greater sanctification, or as an expiation of their past sins. Also, many have been brought to God by suffering who have believed in their self-sufficient health and strength that they could manage quite well without Him. Consider once more the principles given in the replies 13-24 at <http://www.radioreplies.info/radio-replies-vol-1.php>.

There are millions belonging to other religions. Are we Christians superior to them?

At least, Christianity is the superior religion in historical foundation, reasonableness, and in loftiness of teaching and destiny.

They think we are wrong as we think they are. May not Christianity be wrong, and some other religion right?

There is no possibility of that. There is a chance that a man who has not studied the solid evidence for Christianity might become flurried and doubtful in the presence of rival and confident claims. But his doubts would be due to defective information. Again, the fact that a man believes a religion true does not prove it right. It only proves that he thinks it right. He is right who can prove his belief to be solidly grounded. A comparative study of religions proves that Christianity alone has demonstrative evidence of its divine origin. However lofty the doctrines of other religions, they prove to be man-made doctrines, or else they are traced to the influence of primitive or later revelations of God, revelations which legitimately end in the Catholic Church, and not in any other religion.

The more I learn, the more I wonder!

The more you learn about diverse opinions, the more you will wonder at such diversity. The more you learn about the foundations of Christianity, the more you will wonder that men do not advert to its solidity.

Is it not likely that the worship of the sun-gods and earth-gods was replaced by the milder form of the sacrifice of Christ-god, and that Christianity will also yield place to a more ethical system?

It is absurd and quite unhistorical to maintain the derivation of the divinely revealed worship of the true and Infinite God, given precisely to correct the errors of men, from the humanly invented

worship of sun-gods and earth-gods. Also, human reason will never invent a more ethical system than that prescribed for all men by the Author of all justice. It is a little bit early to talk of a more ethical system when men cannot even live up to the ethics of present Catholicity. The Catholic Church tells her children to avoid sin as a very plague; to be strictly temperate, chaste, and pure; to practice humility, yet to possess the courage of the Saints in resisting all evil inclinations and overcoming obstacles to their sanctification; to be strictly just and truthful in their relations both with God and their fellow men; to be faithful for life in the duties of marriage; to love and worship God because He is God, and not merely because, and as long as they feel like doing it. Catholic ethics perfect all that is noblest in man, and culminates in that supreme charity which thinks no evil and much less utters it. When men have come to this standard, then it will be time to speak of a more ethical system. But when they do attain it, their intelligence will be so unclouded by the influence of lower passions that they will see clearly that they have attained the full truth. To Catholics, of course, all this is clear by the very gift of faith. Nature and necessity of faith. You speak of faith. But faith is an emotion, an involuntary action of the senses.

If that is your idea of faith, no wonder you find difficulty. But that is not faith at all, and certainly not the faith required by the Catholic Church. By faith, we believe things. Now people do not believe with their feelings and emotions. They believe with their minds. Belief is a mental conviction. If I tell a woman that her son has been killed, her faith in my knowledge and veracity will make her believe the truth that her son has actually been killed. From this knowledge, emotion may follow as an effect. But an effect is not its cause. Faith, then, is not an emotion, nor is it of the senses. Faith is the intellectual admission that a certain thing is true because although we have not seen the reality ourselves, we reasonably admit that the one who has told us must be reliably informed and not intending to deceive us. Nor is faith involuntary. If I see an accident, I know that it occurred, and it is useless to tell myself that it did not occur. But if you tell me of an accident, and I did not see it myself, then I have no direct evidence. All my evidence is indirect, and I can choose to believe you, or not to do so. I can put my faith in what you tell me, or refuse. It should console you to know that the Catholic Church is just as opposed to the idea of faith you condemn, as you yourself are opposed to it. In fact, she has solemnly defined such a type of assent to be no faith at all, and forbids any priest to receive into the Church one who believes that such a caricature can do duty for the intellectual conviction known as faith. Your faith may be right, but may it not be wrong?

True Christian faith cannot lead one into error. We prove that God has said a thing, and believe because He has said it. Doubt would be possible only could God be deceived, or deceive mankind. But He could not. He knows all things, and is Truth itself. Also, He has given abundant external signs to confirm His revelation. We are certainly right because He must be right. I cannot understand how highly intellectual men can accept obvious legends and fairy tales as historical facts without question or doubt!

Highly intellectual men do accept the doctrines of Christianity as certain. Being highly intellectual, they have not done so without profound investigation of the reasonable grounds for their position. And knowing that such men are convinced, it is not highly intellectual conduct to reject as legends and fairy tales the doctrines they accept, without making a similar investigation. I myself refuse to accept anything which will not stand the acid test of reason. Faith may be a virtue, but it is no use burying one's head in the sand!

I fully agree. Faith is a virtue, and a great gift of God. But it does not imply the burying of one's head in the sand. It teaches us a number of things that are above reason, for the revealed truths known only to God must be a little above ordinary human thought. But whilst faith teaches some truths so profound as to be above natural reason, it never teaches any single doctrine which is opposed to sound and rational principles. Prove any given doctrine to violate correct principles of reason, and I shall cease to believe in it at once. Do you not maintain that faith in Christianity is necessary for one's eternal salvation?

Those who do not know the facts are not required to believe doctrines of which they are unaware. Those who do know the facts cannot be saved unless they believe, for refusal is to insult the God who has deigned to reveal the truth to men. Robert G. Ingersoll says that it is monstrous that future happiness should depend upon belief.

Is that so! Then even if you prove to demonstration that God has said a thing, you need not believe it! You may call God a liar, and if your doing so interferes with your happiness it is monstrous! Ingersoll was a wise man! (I am being ironic!) He says that the notion of faith in Christ being rewarded, whilst dependence upon reason, observation, and experience merits eternal punishment is too absurd to need refutation.

No one ever said that dependence upon reason, observation, and experience merits eternal punishment. Such an assertion proves that Ingersoll did not use reason, observation, or experience to find out the exact teachings of Christianity. He just wrote on, his prejudice supplying for reason in the construction of his nonsensical arguments. If a man does not accept the Bible, can you convince him of your supernatural doctrines by reason alone?

We can prove historically that God certainly gave the Christian revelation, and right reason cannot refute the evidence. It has to admit the value of the Gospels as documentary sources. But reason alone cannot make a man accept the contents of that revelation as having binding value. Only the grace of God can do that, and the preparation best suited to the reception of the gift of faith is a good moral life, and earnest prayer for the help of God. Then without the grace of God, one cannot have this faith?

By reason alone, any ordinary man can know that God exists, that He has given a revelation to man, and any ordinary man is capable of learning the fundamental teachings of Christianity. Yet the perception of the vital force and the sheer reality of the truths God has revealed, with consequent belief in them, requires grace from God. But one who has the goodwill to submit to God's authority, and to pray earnestly for the light to know God's will, can be certain that the necessary supernatural help will be offered to him. I do not see that I am responsible for my position. I applied my reason to the Bible just as I would to anything else, and I doubt Christianity.

You have ignored the element of grace, and have not implored the help of God. Merely human reasoning is not enough. Brains cannot be the condition of salvation. If so, the intellectual would have a better chance of salvation than the less intelligent. You must look round for another method of approach to the religious problem. Whilst no one asks you to go against right reason, yet you must be prepared to rise above it. Saint Paul rightly says that the natural man does not perceive those things that are of the spirit of God. But I cannot believe in the Divinity of Christ.

Since God does not deny any man of really goodwill sufficient grace, the fault lies in your own will. You can believe, if you wish. If you have not examined the evidence for His divinity, you can do so. Until you have done so, your belief that He is not God is mere credulity. You should say, "I have no

opinion on the subject. I have not studied the evidence." When you have studied the evidence carefully, you will have found at least three things: (1) The documentary evidence concerning Christ is perfectly sound. (2) Christ certainly claimed to be God. (3) He certainly did things for which God alone could be responsible. Whether, after this, you will accept what Christ taught or reject it will be a matter for your own choice. Then men can believe or disbelieve in Christianity as they please?

They can, although they may not, once it has been sufficiently brought to their notice. You see, Christ taught certain doctrines, but did not offer any intrinsic demonstration of their truth. He demands that we accept them as a tribute to His knowledge and veracity. As, therefore, He did not do more than merely tell us these truths we are physically free to accept them because of our faith in Him, or to refuse them. To believe is to pay a tribute of confidence, and thus to merit His friendship and the rewards He promised. To refuse to believe deserves punishment because it insults so good and wise a being as Christ. I have studied Christianity and it is my honest opinion that it is not true. Yet you tell me that I am to believe that it is true!

With the help of God's grace, which will not be refused if you desire it, you are able to believe that it is true. A classification of possible states of mind will clarify things for you.

(1) After due study of a certain proposition, a man might see that its truth is intrinsically evident, as one knows for example that two and two make four. By intrinsic analysis, the opposite is evidently false. In this case, a man has not an opinion, nor a belief. He has knowledge by intrinsic evidence, and is not free to think differently. He does not merely incline to think so. (2) Another state of mind, however, is that of the willfully ignorant. One who adverts to the fact that there is a certain problem can refuse to study it, and freely choose to have no opinion on the subject. (3) Another stage is that of the willful doubter. He studies the question to a certain extent. After thinking it over somewhat inadequately he says, "I do not know. There seems to me to be six for, and half a dozen against. I am not inclined to accept one position rather than another. I am in doubt about the whole matter." Such a man can choose to let it go at that, or to continue his investigations until he solves his doubts one way or the other. (4) After due reflection, a man can come to the conclusion that there is intrinsic evidence neither for nor against a given doctrine. As far as he knows, it could be true, or it could be false. But he knows that some authoritative person has said it is true. There is nothing in the proposition itself to prevent his acceptance of it. All is a question of the credentials of his informant. He diverts his attention to the qualities of this authority. If he is satisfied that his authority must know and is truthful, he is free to accept the doctrine because of faith in his teacher, or he is free to disbelieve it on the score that it has not been intrinsically demonstrated to his personal satisfaction.

Now you have studied Christian doctrine, seeking always intrinsic evidence of its truth. You have chosen to adopt the position that it will be false unless you find such intrinsic evidence. You are quite unable to prove it intrinsically false. In the circumstances, you are perfectly free to divert your attention from the aspect you prescribe, study the credentials of Christ as a divine teacher, and, once convinced of their value, accept the doctrine upon His authority. If you do not do so, it will be because you do not choose to do so.

If God did not give me sufficient intelligence to be able to believe, surely no blame attaches to me?

That is true, if God failed to do so. But He did not. Your reason tells you that Christianity teaches certain mysterious things. You ask on what authority it so teaches. You are told that Almighty God has revealed those doctrines. At once, the fact that the doctrines are extraordinary becomes of no

account. God must know, and is certainly supremely truthful. The only point is, did He reveal such doctrines. You are shown that they are contained in the Bible, and that the Catholic Church teaches them. Your duty is to make sure that the Bible is a reliable source of such information, and that the Catholic Church is an institution guaranteed by God as a safe and authentic teacher of men in religious matters. If these things have been reasonably verified, as they certainly can be, you reasonably and freely accept the doctrines thus guaranteed as being of God. Now God has not failed to endow you with sufficient reason to do this. If you refuse to use your reason, or if you misuse it, or if you refuse to believe all that you do not fully comprehend for yourself, despite your knowledge that God has revealed such doctrines, you are to blame. Remember that to refuse to believe because reason does not entirely comprehend a doctrine, is to say that human reason is the ultimate test of all truth. That is not true which human reason cannot demonstrate to its own satisfaction! In the light of the obvious limitation of human reason, and the history of human aberrations in thought, this is clearly an irrational position. The conclusion remains that Christ justified His claims to be the divinely sent Teacher of men; that He sent His Apostles and their legitimate successors to teach all nations; that He thereby laid upon all nations the obligation of being taught; and that, once His teaching has been sufficiently put before them, men are guilty if they presume to reject it. In the case of such men, acceptance of the Christian religion is necessary if they are to be saved. Is one religion as good as another?

How is it possible to believe all the religions that claim to be true?

It is not possible. If any one of them is right, then the others are all wrong. No one asks you to take our word, however, for the truth of the Catholic Church. It can be proved historically that Christ lived, that He was God, and that He founded an imperishable Church, which was to be one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. Find that Church and you will have the true religion of Christ. But our intentions at least are all good. We are all striving for the one end.

The Jews could have made a similar remark to Christ when He tried to convert them to Christianity. If we are Christians, we must deny that good intentions will suffice. And if Christianity is better than the Jewish religion — as Christ knew it was — then if the Catholic Church has the complete doctrine, and every form of Protestantism is incomplete and erroneous, it follows that Catholicism is better than Protestantism, and should be embraced. If there were twelve roads leading to the one goal, would it matter which you took?

Since God has distinctly said that He wishes us to take one particular road — the Catholic road — it does matter. Any doctrine which begins with the fundamental notion that one religion is as good as another soon ends in the conclusion that one religion is as useless as another. And the children of those who insist upon proclaiming that principle end up, as a rule, with no religion at all. We Protestants worship the same God as you Catholics — how can we be wrong? (We Muslims worship the same God too!)

You are not wrong in worshipping the same God. You are wrong in so far as you do not do so in the right way. If I were your employer, and ordered you to go from Sydney to London via Suez, and you went via Panama, you would do the right thing in going to London, but you would do the wrong thing in pleasing yourself as to the choice of route. God wants all men to serve Him, and to serve Him in the Catholic Church. The Catholic way is completely right; the Protestant way is more than half wrong, as is the Jewish or Muslim way too — even more so as they have wrong notions

about Jesus Christ. The fallacy of indifference. I am a Protestant who leads a good life. That is enough.

That you lead a good life is to be commended. But it would be better to do it in the way God wishes, rather than in your own way. Your leading a good life cannot prove your religion true. If it did, then the fact that a Catholic lives a good life also proves the Catholic Church true. Yet if your religion is true, the Catholic Church is not. You cannot appeal to your own life as proof, but must find out how Christ described His Church, and then look for that Church.

But we Protestants believe that if a man lives a good life, no matter what Church he accepts, he will save his soul.

Some Protestants believe that. Many do not. Good Protestants can be saved, but if they are good, they are Protestants in good faith who have the will to do God's will, and are not Catholics merely because they do not realize their obligation to join the true Church. Yet surely, the only thing wrong is to do wrong.

And is not one doing wrong when he refuses to bother about doctrinal belief? Why did Christ say, "He that believes shall be saved?" Why did He send the Apostles to teach doctrine? Not only are good works required, but also the true faith. Christianity is not a thing to be proved; it is a life to be lived.

That is taking refuge in credulity. Every rational man, if he does a thing, should know why he does it. Moreover, Christianity is a set of truths to be believed as well as a life to be lived. It imposes obligations upon the intelligence as well as upon the will and the passions. Jesus said, "Repent and believe the Gospel." But before a reasonable man believes, he must either prove the doctrine true in itself, or at least that God has revealed it, then he knows that it must be true even though he himself does not fully comprehend it. To say that God is indifferent as to whether a man is a Protestant or a Catholic goes very close to blasphemy. If He revealed the doctrines of Protestantism, He could not possibly be pleased with one who would deliberately accept the opposite by embracing Catholicism. There is good and bad in all the churches.

If you mean that there are good men and bad men in all religions, you are right. But if you mean that the teachings of all churches, including the Catholic Church, are partly true and partly false, you are wrong. The teachings of all non-Catholic churches are partly true and partly false. Partly true, for a religion consisting wholly of error could not exist. Partly false, because all non-Catholic churches are a denial that Christ made sufficient provision for the Church He established. But not a single false doctrine is to be found in the official teaching of the Catholic Church, which is the work, not of man, but of God. If a man is obliged to accept the truth in its entirety, and not a fragment of the truth, he is obliged to accept the Catholic Church as his guide. Protestants know that no more is needed than prayer in their own hearts.

Few Protestants would thank you for such a dreadful description of their religion. Nothing more is necessary? Do what you like, but say that prayer in your heart! Also, had Christ but one doctrine to give, namely, "Say a prayer in your own hearts." He went a very strange way about teaching that doctrine. You must admit that spiritually I am your brother.

Yes, we are brothers. However, more needs to be said. In so far as you are sincere, Our Lord overlooks your mistaken notions and accepts your love for Him. But the fact remains that you serve Him in your way, and not in His, and that He does not obtain from you all that He desires. Also,

what He overlooks in you He would not overlook in a Catholic who has known the truth. Have not the disciples of Jesus, even outside the Catholic Church, power and authority given them by the Holy Spirit?

No. Not all the sincerity in the world can be a sufficient substitute for authentic credentials in this matter. An immense power and authority over the souls of men requires solid proof that it is really possessed. Christ proved that He had it. The Catholic Church can prove that He entrusted that power to Her. Founders of other churches had no more than their own personal conviction that they possessed such authority — a persuasion as insufficient as would be my own personal belief that I had the authority of the Chief Justice in the land. But I feel that I am right. I have the witness in myself.

Witness in oneself may easily be purely subjective persuasion, and is no sure test of truth. Men holding totally divergent views claim to experience this witness within themselves, yet they cannot all have the exact truth revealed by Christ. Thank God, intellectual mistakes do not always mean evil dispositions. But remember that Christ allowed the Jews to go (see John 6:66-67) because they knowingly refused to accept His teaching on the Eucharist — a teaching you also, like many other Protestants, reject, as we shall see. If you knew what you were doing, He would reject you also. The Kingdom of God is within you.

The Kingdom of God as established by Christ is at once a visible Church in this world, and an invisible spiritual Kingdom of grace within the soul. External adherence to the visible Kingdom demands also that Christ reign by grace within the soul. But this interior grace does not dispense a man from accepting the will of Christ once he is aware of it, nor from the obligation to join the visible Kingdom established by Him in this world. Christ distinctly said, "I will build my Church" (Matthew 16:18); and again, "If a man will not hear the Church, let him be as the heathen." (Matthew 18:17) He was obviously referring to the authority of a visible Church. He also likened His Church to a net holding good and bad fish. This cannot refer to a Kingdom of spiritual and invisible grace only, for bad fish are not in a state of grace. Christ died for all, and does not say that He did so for members of any particular Church. He does not mention either Catholicism or Protestantism.

The teaching of Christ clearly condemns Protestant principles, and insists upon the acceptance of Catholic principles. He did die for all who would accept Him, but one does not accept Him who rejects knowingly the very definite and particular religion He gave to the world. And He predicted that that religion would be characterized by unity of doctrine, holiness of moral precepts, catholicity or universality, and continuous succession from the Apostles. The denominations are necessary to save us from the dictation of priests.

The authority of the priesthood will be the subject of our consideration in due time. Meantime the denominations were not necessary according to the mind of Christ. He prayed that all might be one, as He and His Father are one. Saint Paul said (in Galatians 1:8) that even though an Angel from heaven were to preach a gospel differing from that already given, he should be regarded as accursed. No one had any right to establish the denominations, with their varying doctrines. I admit that it is a pity that there is so much conflict.

It is ten thousand times a pity. But remember that the Catholic Church did not start the conflict. She cannot be blamed for the domestic troubles of Protestantism. All Catholics at least are in doctrinal unity. But why keep insisting that the Catholic Church is the only Church?

Because Christ said, "If a man will not hear the Church, let him be as the heathen." (Matthew 18:17) He did not say, "If a man will not hear a portion of the Gospel in man-made substitute churches." You cannot deny that you are bigoted in your exclusive claims.

Bigotry is blind zeal. It is not bigotry to say that a thing cannot be true if its opposite is proved to be correct. Truth must exclude error. We are as entitled to our opinions as you are to yours.

You are. And you might be able to think out ideas just as valuable as ourselves. But here it is not a question of human opinions. It is a question of God's teaching, and neither your opinions nor our opinions have any value if they contradict that. Catholic doctrine is not our opinion, but His doctrine, He Who sent the Church to teach in His name. But are you not obliged by the law of charity? Christ said, "Do unto others as you would have them do to you."

We are obliged by the law of charity. But charity does not forbid one to tell the truth. It forbids blaming people who, through no fault of their own, do not know the truth. Nor would the Catholic Church wish Protestants to admit that she is right if she were not right. And since she can prove that they are not right, she is not doing to them what she would not have them do to her in denying the correctness of their religion. All the same, your claims are insulting to Protestants, and they are human beings just as Catholics.

The Catholic Church has to condemn Protestantism as a system. But she desires to insult no single Protestant. That Protestants are human beings does not prove their religion true. Otherwise, the fact that Catholics are human beings also would prove their religion true.

As a matter of fact, in so far as Protestants are human beings we Catholics love them, and it is our very interest in them which makes us want to give them the best religion in the world — Catholicism. Protestantism is not good enough for them.

Your Church is doing more to prevent reunion than any other Church.

That is a great compliment to the Catholic Church, when we consider the conditions others lay down as the basis of reunion. For it means that she is doing more than any other church to keep intact the religion entrusted to her by Christ, and that she steadily refuses to let her heart run away with her head by admitting that whatever sincere but mistaken men would like to be true is good enough, and that what Christ exactly taught does not really matter. Anyway, only one in a hundred thousand ever changes from the religion of his parents.

One instance is enough to refute that statement. Your proportion would be about four hundred in forty millions. Now the population of England is about forty millions, and in England alone, the average number of converts to the Catholic Church is over twelve thousand yearly. The number is even greater in America, and a steady stream of converts is the experience of most other countries also. However, the one instance of England is a sufficient reply to your extravagant assertion. At least Protestantism is more tolerant than Catholicism. I am an Anglican, but I do not say that I am right. I believe in everyone believing as he thinks best, and not criticizing others!

You take up an extraordinary position. If you do not say that you are right, you cannot have definite grounds for your belief, and such belief is credulity. And do you really believe in everyone believing in his own belief? Whether that belief be right or wrong? If so, you believe in people believing in error. But Christ came precisely to stop people from believing in error. Far from allowing people to believe in their own beliefs, He commanded them to give up their previous beliefs, and believe in what He taught, if they wished to save their souls. I believe with you in not

criticizing others. I give them credit for sincerity and goodness. But it is quite lawful to criticize their theories. But in the end, is not religion a matter of opinion?

If you except the Catholic Church, I'm afraid it is. That other churches think so is shown by the amazing exchanges of pulpits and attendances. But the Catholic Church is a different thing altogether. Until we prove a thing, it is a matter of opinion. Thus before Australia was discovered, it was a matter of opinion as to whether a southern continent existed or not. But once discovered, it was no longer a matter of opinion. So, too, if God had never given a revelation about religion, it might be a matter of opinion. But once God speaks in a definite way, it is no longer a matter of opinion. When the Creator speaks, the creature must simply accept.

Now God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, who established one definite Church, to which He gave His teaching authority. This does not look like religion being a matter of opinion. Here we have God's decision, and we must accept it. If our human opinions suggest anything against the teaching of Christ, or against the teaching of His Church, we just renounce our own fallible ideas as being the foolish notions of untaught children. The Protestant clings to his own opinions whether they are in harmony with God's explicit teachings or not. Nor does he make much effort to find out what those teachings are. But God would no more admit that the religion revealed by Him is a mere matter of opinion than your grocer would admit that the amount owing to him is a mere matter of opinion.

Would it not be better to say that religion is a matter of conscience?

No. If the individual conscience is to be the guide, there will be as many religions as consciences. There are right consciences and wrong consciences. Conscience is right if it squares with the laws of God. It is warped if it be at variance with the will of God. However, if conscience alone matters, why did not Christ leave us all to our consciences, instead of carefully teaching His Apostles a definite set of doctrines to be preached and to be believed? Conscience must accept the teachings of Christ, who could neither be deceived, nor deceive us. Why try to convert people to the Catholic Church?

Why did Christ try to convert people to His special doctrines? And why did He send His Church to teach all nations? If God gives the truth to man by sending His Son, is it not better to have that truth to guide one's conduct? Or is it better to be in partial or total ignorance, omitting much that ought to be done, and being forgiven by God only because not knowing any better? To know the truth and live exactly as God intends is much better than asking to be excused from it on the plea of ignorance. I know that Protestants are ignorant of Catholicity, but are not Catholics ignorant of Protestantism?

Very often. But there is this difference. The Catholic who does not understand Protestantism does not know the wrong thing. The Protestant who does not know Catholicism does not know the right thing. I personally know both, having been brought up in Protestantism, which I renounced in favor of Catholicism. Have Catholics any advantages not possessed by good Protestants?

All things else being equal, and strictly from the viewpoint of the religions, Catholics have many advantages. They have the full truth contained in Sacred Scripture and in the teaching Church. The Protestant accepts only part of Scripture, and has no God-appointed guide. Certainly, a man with full information as to the road leading to a given destination has greater advantages than one with defective information. Again, Catholics have more means of grace than non-Catholics. They have the sacrifice of the Mass, and seven Sacraments. You may say that Christ gives grace at times independently of the Sacraments instituted by Him for this purpose. But why should He, when He

definitely institutes seven Sacraments for the purpose? And even granting that He does give certain graces to those in good faith, those graces are not so plentiful, nor of the same nature as the special Sacramental graces. You insist, then, that not any form of Christianity will do, but that we ought to join the Catholic Church?

Yes. As a matter of fact, a close study of other forms will suggest only reasons for abandoning them, whilst an equally close study of Catholicism intensifies the conviction that in the Catholic Church, and in her alone, can the full truth be found.
