

SIGNPOSTS TO THE CHURCH

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GOD

1. GOD EXISTS
2. WE MUST WORSHIP GOD
3. IN THE WAY HE TEACHES US

CHRIST

1. CHRIST IS GOD

Proved from

(a) The Gospels (b) His Miracles (c) Prophecy (d) His Character (e) His Claims (f) The Resurrection

2. CHRIST'S WAY IS GOD'S WAY
3. WE MUST ACCEPT ALL CHRIST'S TEACHING

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

1. CHRIST ORGANIZED A CHURCH
2. ONLY THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IS CHRIST'S CHURCH
 - (a) It is the Scriptural Church
 - (b) It is Apostolic, One, Universal, Holy
 - (c) Its Head is the Successor of the Head Christ Appointed
3. THE CATHOLIC CHURCH MUST BE ACCEPTED

I would like to explain as simply as I can the main arguments for the truth of the Catholic Church. You may not be a scholar and perhaps you do not understand some of the words usually found in books on religion. I will do my best to help you.

Suppose we group everything round three big facts. The first is GOD, the second is Jesus CHRIST, and the third is the CHURCH.

GOD

The first big fact—God. I think you already believe that there is a God, but to help you I will explain as simply as I can why that must be so. A story might help you.

1. God exists

About 300 years ago there lived a famous scientist called Kircher. He made a splendid model of what he knew of the Universe. When a button was pressed, the stars, the moon and the planets began to move around the globe. He kept this in his study. One day a young man came in who was proud of being an atheist. Kircher knew this and was determined to teach him a lesson. He had not long to wait for his opportunity. The young man pointed to the model of the globe and asked, 'Who made that?' Quite solemnly, Kircher replied 'Nobody, of course, it just happened'. The young man looked puzzled. 'Nobody?' he said, almost without thinking. 'Yes, nobody', replied Kircher. Then the young man said, 'But somebody must have made it; it could not have made itself'. 'Well spoken', said Kircher; 'in those words you have condemned yourself. You boast of your atheism. You say that this little model must have had a designer and yet you deny that the Universe itself, which is millions of times more complicated, came into existence without a designer. I hope you see now how silly you are.'

That is a perfectly valid argument, isn't it? You can apply it to anything you like. Think of matter itself. Nuclear

physics revolves round the fact that matter is highly designed, made up of molecules, atoms, protons, electrons and things. There must have been a designer. To say it all just happened is nonsense.

Here is a question for you. Can you think of anything at all which did not at some time or other come from something else? I am sure the answer is 'No, nothing except God'. All men, all animals, all plants and everything we come across during life come from something else. Some scientists think everything evolved but there must have been something in the beginning which developed into all the things we have today. If ever there was nothing there is still nothing, because nothing cannot by itself become something. You and I know that all the things that exist receive their existence from something else. You cannot go back for ever without finding a starting point somewhere. All the things we know of, which receive their existence, exist only because something gives existence in the first place.

Try an experiment for yourself, a very simple one. At breakfast tomorrow morning, when you want a cup of coffee, put your cup on the table in the saucer. Do nothing else. You certainly will not get any coffee. Now take an empty jug and pour the contents into your empty cup. You are still waiting for your coffee. Now take that empty jug and fill it from an empty coffee urn. Still no coffee. You can go on doing that until the Thames runs dry and you just will not get any coffee until somebody puts some in the urn. Instead of coffee, think of the existence of everything—nothing can have it unless something gives in the first place. That giver of existence is Being itself. It is God. He is the completely independent being on whom everybody and everything else depends.

What do we know about God? When we come to think about our second big fact, Jesus Christ, we shall discover quite a lot about Him. For the moment let us just use our reason. By your experiment with the coffee you have proved that God is independent. That means that nothing limits Him. Therefore He has no body. You know how your body limits you; it keeps you where you are. You have to stay where there are air and drink and food. A being without a body is a spirit. So God is a spirit.

When we were talking about Kircher and his model, we found out that God had designed the Universe and all matter. He is intelligent. Because He has no limits there are no bounds to His intelligence. When anything has no limits we say it is infinite. You can say this about God in every way. Think of any quality that you like to see in human beings, such as love, goodness, mercy, power, justice, truth, wisdom and the rest. God does not only possess all of these, He is all of them; they are His very being. For example, His power has no limits. Another word for power is might, so we speak of God as being All-mighty, almighty. That is the first point we must make about our first fact: God exists.

2. We must worship God

The second point is that we must show by our conduct that we depend entirely on God. In other words, we must worship Him. We belong to Him, just as much as the sand-castle you made on the beach when you were little belonged to you. The difference between you and your sand-castle is that you can speak to the God who made you. You can tell Him how wonderful He is. You can tell Him you are sorry if you do things against His wishes. You can ask Him for what you need. Doing these things is religion. You can see that it is a duty. Here is a story to make that clear.

Two men went aboard a liner in London docks to emigrate to Australia. They shared a cabin. As the liner was sailing down the Thames estuary, one of the men had a stroke and became quite helpless. The other man looked after him for the rest of the voyage. When they arrived at Sydney, relatives of the sick man came and took him away. Neither he nor his relatives said so much as 'Thank you' to the man who had spent six weeks nursing him. You will surely say that was very ungrateful. Men who never pray to God treat Him like that. God has done far more for us than that passenger did for his sick friend. God has given us everything that we are. He keeps us in being every moment we live. He provides us with so many wonderful gifts that we can never hope to count them all.

Common sense tells us that we must acknowledge that we depend on Him. We owe God a debt. Paying our debts is called justice. A man who never pays his debts is an unjust man. A man who never worships God is not paying his debts to God. He is an unjust man. Worship and religion are our debt to God. That is the second point under our first big fact: God must be worshipped.

3. We must worship God in the way He teaches us.

And now we come to our third point. It is simply this: if God has told us how He wants to be worshipped, we must worship Him in that way and in no other. All the rights are on His side. He is the complete master. We depend on Him for everything, even our being. So we have no right to turn round to God and say: 'I will worship you as I choose, but not in the way you told me'. What would have happened to you at school if you had said to your teacher, 'I do not mind doing sums but I will do them in my own way and not the way you teach me'? If you ever did say that you have probably painful memories of it!

CHRIST

Under our first big fact, we have discussed three points like this: God—1, He exists; 2, He must be worshipped; 3, He must be worshipped in the way He has revealed. That brings us to our second great fact. It is the fact of Jesus Christ.

1. Christ is God

Under this fact, too, we have three important points. The first of them is this: Christ is God. From your school days you probably remember quite a lot about the life of Jesus Christ. He was born nearly 2,000 years ago in a stable at Bethlehem. His mother was the Virgin Mary, and his foster-father was Joseph. When He was born angels sang to shepherds nearby and they came to adore Him. Three Kings also came from the East to adore Him and give Him their presents. When King Herod was jealous and wanted to kill Him an angel appeared to Joseph and told him to take the Infant Jesus into Egypt. When Herod had died the Holy Family came back and lived at Nazareth. There Jesus helped Joseph, who was a carpenter. When He was thirty He left home. He fasted for forty days and nights in the desert and allowed Himself to be tempted by the devil. Then He began preaching and supported His preaching by doing wonderful things called miracles. He brought dead people back to life, changed water into wine, cured all kinds of diseases, multiplied a few loaves and fishes to feed a great crowd, and so on. We know that He foretold future events in great detail. The Jewish leaders were jealous of Him and wanted to kill Him. He had chosen twelve Apostles whom He wished to train to carry on His work. One of them betrayed Him to the Jews. He was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, tried, tortured, beaten and eventually killed by being nailed to a cross. He was buried; but on the third day He rose again from His tomb. For forty days He continued to appear to His immediate followers, teaching them very special lessons. Then He went up from the Mount of Olives into Heaven and ten days later the Holy Spirit came down on His Apostles as He had foretold.

THE GOSPELS

We know about Christ mainly from four history books called Gospels. Gospel is an old English word meaning good news. The writers of the Gospels are Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. They are called Evangelists. Matthew and John were our Lord's personal followers; Mark might have known Him personally but he got most of his facts from Peter, who was the chief of our Lord's Apostles; Luke was a doctor who got his information from our Lord's Mother and others who had known Him personally. St John tells us that the Gospels are not a full account of our Lord's life. They are only outlines.

You will naturally want to know whether these Gospels can be believed. You may think that after all this time they may have been changed or misunderstood. Let me assure you that no books have been more thoroughly and minutely examined than these Gospels. Scholars have studied them from every angle. They have compared what they say with what is found out from other sources, such as excavations and inscriptions. The more research is done on the Gospels the more their truth is established. Still, the main way in which we learn about Christ is called Tradition. In fact, we know most historical things by tradition. Have you ever read a life of the Duke of Wellington? You probably know quite a bit about him because you were told it at school. You know that he won the Battle of Waterloo. So it is with a great deal of the knowledge you have at this moment. In the same way traditions about Christ have been kept alive in the Church. St John tells us that all the books in the world would not be enough to contain the full story of His words and deeds. But, for the moment, we will limit ourselves to what the Gospels tell us.

CHRIST'S MIRACLES, PROPHECIES AND CHARACTER

Read them and you will find descriptions of the wonderful things Christ did. They are called miracles. In fact, if you take the stories of miracles out of the Gospels you have not very much left. Christ, whom Catholics often refer to as Our Blessed Lord, told the people of His day that He worked miracles so that they would believe that His message was really from God, whom He always called His Father.

You will discover also that Christ foretold future events in astonishing detail. For example, He said in advance that He would be denied by Peter and betrayed by Judas, that He would be struck and scourged and spat upon, that He would be killed and buried and would rise again on the third day, that he would ascend into Heaven and send His Holy Spirit down on the Apostles. He foretold also the destruction of the city of Jerusalem, which actually took place in the year 70. He also described in advance the marvellous spread of His Church and its persecution. This, like His miracles, shows that God was with Him.

While you read the Gospels you will learn a lot about the character of Jesus Christ. It is the most perfect character ever described in human words. It was in great contrast to the accepted teachings of His time. His own teaching corresponded to His character. It is the wisest and the most sublime the world has ever known. The people He spoke to remarked that He taught with authority.

Put all these things together in your mind—our Lord's miracles, His prophecies, His character and His teaching—and you will agree that whatever He claimed about Himself must have God's support. God would certainly never allow anybody to do all the wonderful things Jesus Christ did if He was falsely claiming to be God.

CHRIST'S CLAIMS

When you read the Gospels you will see how often Christ claimed to be God. Of course He could not claim it directly all at once. If He had told the Jews in the simplest possible words that He was their God, they would have stoned Him and He would have had no chance of giving men all the things He wanted them to have, such as His example, His teaching and His Church. He had to prepare them gently. But in the end He told them very clearly that He was one and the same Being as His Father in Heaven. Before the world came into being He existed with His Father. He claimed for Himself the name the Jews had always given to God. It is really Yahwe, which means *I am*. It has been corrupted to Jehovah. He said on oath before the High Priest that He was the judge of all men. He forgave sins in His own name, and when the Jews told Him that only God could do that He worked a miracle to prove that He could do it and that therefore He was God. The Jews knew that He was claiming to be God because they said to Pilate that He was guilty of death because He claimed to be God.

CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

We have seen that God supported that claim, but so far I have hardly mentioned the main reason why we know that. It is because Christ came to life again when He had been brutally killed. He said He would do that. And He did it. For forty days after coming back to life He allowed Himself to be seen frequently by His followers. They talked to Him and even had meals with Him. Of course, the Jews were anxious to prove that He had not risen from the dead at all. They invented the silly story that the Apostles had stolen Christ's body when the guards were asleep. It is silly because if the guards were asleep how did they know what happened or, if the body were stolen, who stole it? In any case, all the Jews had to do was to produce the body. Not only did they not do that but there is not the slightest indication that they ever even searched for the body. There is no more certain event in history than the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. He did it by His own power. He is God. That is our first point under our second big fact: Jesus Christ is truly God. He is, of course, really man also.

2. Christ's Way is God's Way

Our second point follows from that very easily. Because Christ is God every word that He says is God's word; everything He does is God's deed; everything He gives is God's gift. The religion He taught is God's religion. It is the way in which God wishes to be worshipped. That is the second point: Christ's way is God's way. Christ's religion is

God's religion. Christ's teaching is God's teaching. What Christ commands or forbids God commands or forbids.

3. We must accept all Christ's teaching

The third point follows directly. We must accept everything in Christ's teaching without exception. We have no right to pick and choose. We have no right to say, for example, I agree with that and shall do it; but I do not like that and shall not do it. We must accept the lot.

Now we can summarize as far as we have gone. The first big fact is God. We made three points: 1, God exists; 2, God must be worshipped; 3, God must be worshipped in the way He has revealed. The second big fact is Jesus Christ. About Him we also make three points: 1, He is God; 2, His religion is God's religion; 3, We must accept it.

THE CHURCH

1. Christ organized a Church

Our third big fact is Christ's Church. The first point under this fact is that Christ organized a Church and commanded all men to belong to it. Read the Gospels for yourself. You can buy them for a few pence from the Catholic Truth Society. You will find from them that Christ did not just begin a religious movement in a vague sort of way. He was not satisfied with giving us example or even teaching. He did not just launch ideas and do nothing more about them. He started a definite organization and made one of His followers its head. He told it what to do and how to do it. He spoke of it as 'My Church'.

The Gospels tell us how Christ chose His Apostles. First of all He summoned them individually to follow Him. Then there was a kind of ceremonial or official calling. After a night in prayer He called out the Twelve from the crowd. He named them Apostles, which word is from the Greek. It means an envoy, one who is sent. The names of the Twelve are given in official lists, and Simon, whose name our Lord changed to Peter, is definitely said to be first. He gave these Twelve very special powers. They were to teach men, govern men and make men holy. Here are some of our Lord's words to them : 'Going, therefore, teach ye all nations ... to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved : but he that believeth not shall be condemned. Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth shall be bound also in heaven; whatsoever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them: and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained. As the Father hath sent me, I also send you'.

Our Lord organized the kind of Church that people could see. He said that in case of dispute they were to tell the Church, appeal to the Church. Those who did not accept the ruling of the Church were to be cast out. In the language of our Lord's own day they were to be 'like the heathen'.

Think especially about our Lord's last words to His Apostles. Here they are: 'All power is given to me in Heaven and in earth. Going, therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world'. Think about that. See how our Lord claims universal Kingship. All power is His. Because of that—notice how He says therefore—He is passing on His mission to His Apostles. He uses the little word all four times. Because He possesses all power He tells them that they are to teach all nations all His revelation for all time. There are no exceptions. There is no country in which they must not preach nor any individual whom they must not approach. Christ's teaching is for everybody. His Church is to go on until the end of time. He never speaks about His Churches. It is always one Church. He likens it to a household, a sheepfold, a flock. He said He had other sheep who were not in His fold. They must be brought in and hear His voice so there would be one fold and one shepherd.

After His last supper, Jesus prayed beautifully to His Father that the Church he had organized would always remain united. Its unity was to be like that which existed between Him and His Father: 'That they all may be one, as Thou in me and I in Thee'. This unity was to be so wonderful that it would mark out the Church as being founded by God. Because Christ is God His prayer must have been heard. Whenever He prayed for anything it had to be created.

Therefore His Church must always possess most wonderful unity. It would not possess this unity if its members did not all believe the same thing and all worship in the same way and all obey the same authority.

When Jesus had gone up into Heaven His Church went to work among men. Its early history is described in that book of the Bible called The Acts of the Apostles. It was written by St Luke about thirty-three years after our Lord went up into Heaven. From the beginning of the story we see that the Church is an organized thing. It had deacons, priests, bishops, sacraments and discipline. So there is no doubt about our first point. Christ organized a Church. The Gospels describe how He did it and the Acts of the Apostles describe how it worked after He had gone back to Heaven. There are a lot more things we discover about this Church. For example, Jesus said it would always have His Holy Spirit as its special guide. With a guide like that it could never lead men astray. In fact, Christ said: 'He that heareth you heareth me'. Anybody who heard Christ certainly heard the truth. So when the Church teaches it teaches the truth. It can never go wrong in the essentials of its teaching, of its worship or its authority. Again, Jesus said that men would become members of His Church by being baptized. He told the Apostles to baptize. Ever since, baptism has been the way by which men joined Christ's Church. The very fact that you have an admission ceremony means that you join an organization. From the beginning there has been this ceremony of admission to the Church of Christ. It was His own personal instruction. So we know that He left behind Him a religious organization.

2. Only the Catholic Church is Christ's Church

Now pass on to our second point. It is that the Catholic Church, and only the Catholic Church, with its head, the Pope, is the Church which Christ founded. This is proved in several ways, but we will use just three. The first is to examine the Church as it was immediately after Christ's Ascension. We have already done that, and when we compare the Catholic Church with the Church that we discovered in the Acts of the Apostles we find that they are the same. The head of the Church of the Acts was St Peter; the head of the Catholic Church today is the successor of St Peter, the Pope. The Church of the Acts taught with a certain voice; the Catholic Church today teaches with that same certain voice. The Church in the Acts had its Bishops, Priests and Deacons; the Catholic Church today has its Bishops, Priests and Deacons. The Church in the Acts had its definite doctrine; the Catholic Church today teaches those same doctrines. More than that, every Catholic priest derives his spiritual power from his connection with the Apostles. For example, the priest who is writing these lines was ordained by the late Archbishop Downey of Liverpool. Archbishop Downey received the power to ordain priests when he was consecrated bishop by three other bishops. Those three were consecrated by three others, and so on. Continue the line right back and you will eventually end with the Apostles. All the bishops in each line acknowledged the authority of the Pope. They all taught the same doctrines and they all worshipped in the same way. There never was any break at all. The Catholic Church is exactly the same organization which Christ founded. It is the Church of the Apostles—really and fully Apostolic.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH: ONE AND UNIVERSAL

Now look at the Catholic Church today and throughout her history. Remember that Jesus Christ said she was to teach all nations. She has done it and is doing it still. Look at our world. See the divisions between men. We have not yet recovered after two world wars. Our race is fearful because of the division between East and West. The United Nations Organization serves to show how disunited the nations are. Attempts to establish a universal language have failed. Trade restrictions remain. There are differences of colour, national traditions, language, climate, occupation, character, class, political loyalties and so on. Yet the Catholic Church bridges all these differences. In it men of every class, colour, nation, tongue and clime all believe the same doctrines, all worship in the same way and all obey the same authority. But that is not all.

Go back through the centuries. Think of Catholics anywhere at any time. How they all differ. St Agnes was a girl of twelve when she was martyred in Rome about the year 300. St Maria Goretti was a girl of twelve when she was martyred in Italy in the year 1902. Both believed the same things, both went to the same Mass, received the same sacraments and both recognized the authority of the Pope. St Thomas More, Lord Chancellor of England, who was executed by King Henry VIII in 1539, believed exactly the same as St Benedict, the father of the monks here in the

West, who died in 543. St Francis of Assisi, who died in 1226, believed, worshipped and obeyed in exactly the same way as St Francis Xavier, who died as a missionary in the Far East in 1552. United in these three things, in the same beliefs, the same worship and obedience to the same authority, are Catholics of all time, no matter how they are separated by miles and years.

St Anthony of Padua, the wonder-worker who died in 1231, was thus united with St Augustine, who brought the Faith to England from Rome in 597. St Patrick, the Apostle of Ireland, who died in 493, practised exactly the same faith as St Joan of Arc, the Maid of Orleans, who was burned at the stake in 1431. St. Edward the Confessor, the English king who died in 1066, was sanctified by precisely the same religion as St Martin de Porres, the South American half-caste, who was canonized by Pope John in 1962. So you could go on. If you were to take a kind of space ship and go back through the centuries and across the miles and meet any Catholic of any nation you would find there the identical belief, worship and obedience which you would find in any Catholic today.

How do you explain this marvellous combination of unity and universality? Remember that religion seems to be the one thing which tends to divide people. They argue about it so easily. How would you account for the fact that all these millions upon millions who are separated by hundreds of miles and hundreds of years all agree in belief and doctrine and obedience to the same authority? There is no natural explanation. It is something brought about by God. It is the result of the prayer of Christ. You find it in no other religion in the whole wide world.

THE CHURCH IS HOLY

All the Saints are the true fruits of the Catholic Church. Together they are the most wonderful company of heroes and heroines the world has ever known. They made themselves holy through using the means of holiness offered them by the Church, the same means which are available to every Catholic who has ever lived. They prove that the Church is holy in her teaching, in her worship and in her authority. They are the good fruit of the good tree. So we prove our second point. The Catholic Church today is the best argument for its own truth. She is stamped by God with four marks which identify her as His own. She is one and universal, apostolic and holy.

THE POPE IS ST PETER'S SUCCESSOR

A third proof remains. It is very simple. While He lived on earth Jesus Christ made St Peter the head of His Church. He changed his name to signify that he would be the foundation of the Church. His authority would hold all the members of the Church together like the foundation-stone of a building holds together all the things that make it. Peter was given authority over the whole flock. Christ prayed for him that he would never fail. Christ's prayer must have been heard because He was God. In the Acts of the Apostles Peter acted as a head and was acknowledged as the head. Today the Pope in Rome is the successor of St Peter in a direct, unbroken line. At any period in history you could find the Church of Christ by finding the head Christ appointed. In other words, if you find the successor of St Peter you find Christ's Church. That is why the Catholic Church today is the one organized by Christ Himself.

So we come to the end of our second point under our third fact. The Catholic Church is one and the same as that founded by Christ Himself.

3. The Catholic Church must be accepted

The third point is obvious and easy. It follows from all we have written. Remember that God must be worshipped in the way He has revealed. Christ is God. His way is God's way. It must be accepted. The Catholic Church is Christ's way; it is God's way; it must be accepted. It is the one authority Christ left upon earth. To it and to it alone He said, 'He that heareth you heareth me. Whatsoever you bind upon earth will be bound also in Heaven. I will be with you all days, even to the consummation of the world'. As you go back through history all the non-Catholic bodies disappear. In 1850 there were no Christian Scientists, Mormons or Salvationists. In 1800 there were no Plymouth Brethren, in 1700 no Methodists, in 1590 no Baptists, Congregationalists or Quakers, in 1500 no Protestants, Presbyterians or Lutherans and in 800 no separated Eastern Church. The Catholic Church, centred in Rome, was there all the time. Nobody has ever been able to name a founder of it except Jesus Christ who was the one true God. It is His gift to all men. He wants all men to join it.

Note.—In this booklet I have tried to indicate as simply as possible the straight road to the Catholic Church. I have not even interrupted the text by including references to quotations from the New Testament. You will probably want to read more about the points I have made. You can obtain booklets on practically all of them from the Australian Catholic Truth Society. When you come across references to quotations from Scripture in them you should look them up in a Bible. When, for example, you find this: (Matt. 6:20), it means that the text is the twentieth verse of the sixth chapter of St Matthew's Gospel.
