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The Visible Sanctity of the Church  
AS  
A Note and a Motive of Credibility  
(An Historical Study of Christian Tradition)

Summary of A DISSERTATION

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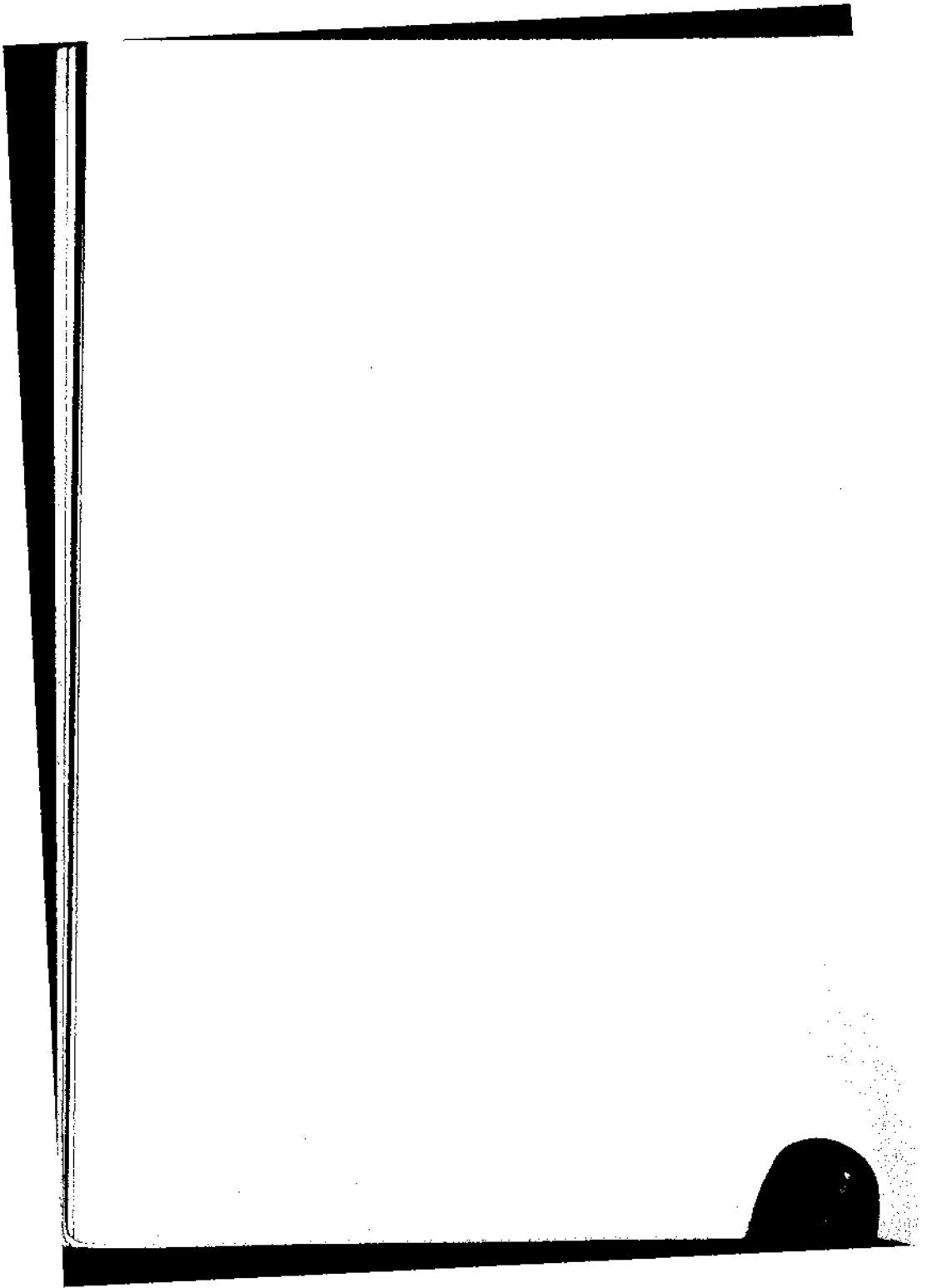
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## FOREWORD.

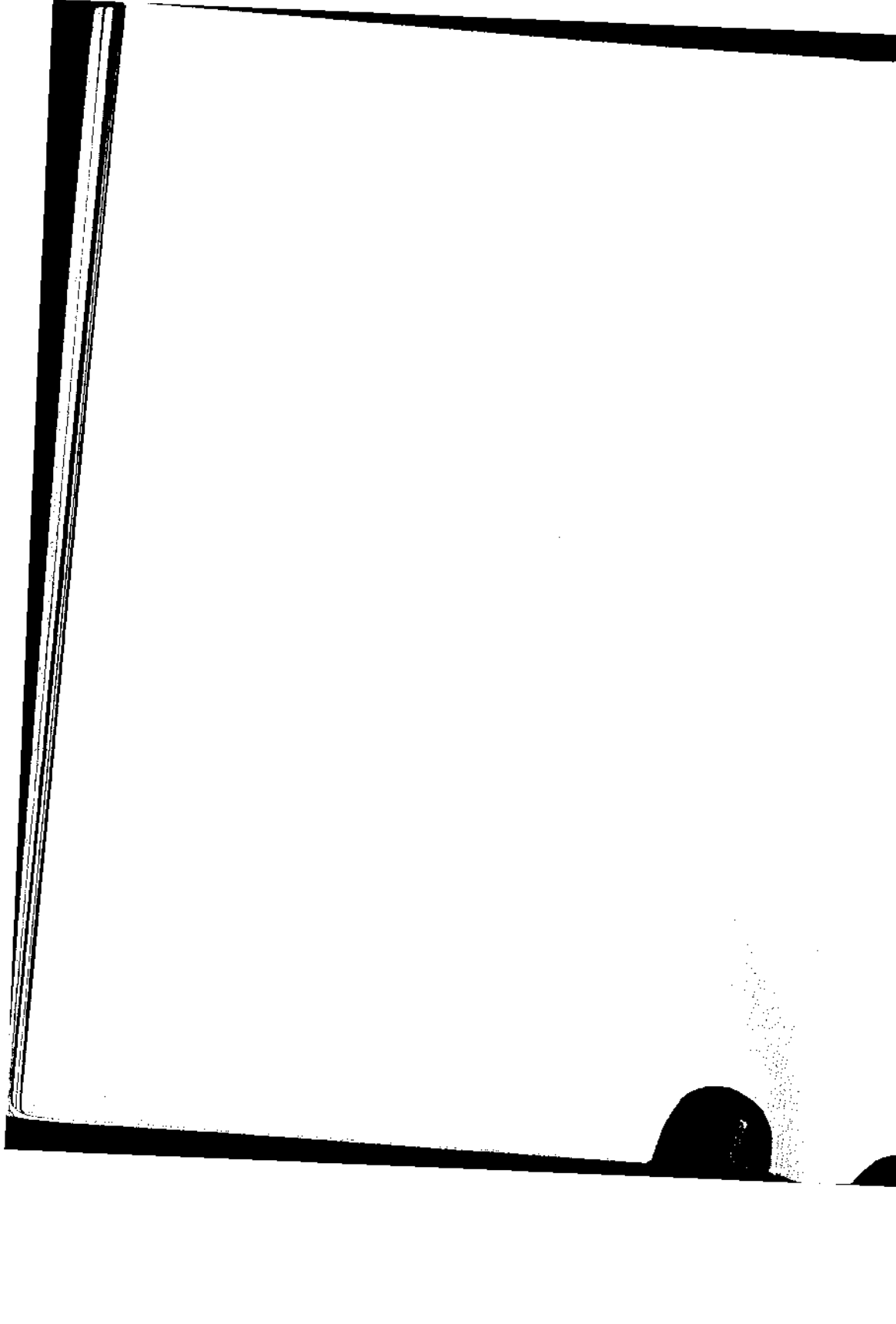
I wish to take the opportunity afforded by the publication of this dissertation to publicly express my heartfelt thanks and sincere appreciation to Doctor Joseph C. Fenton of the Faculty of Sacred Theology in the Catholic University of America. His kind guidance and constructive criticism were responsible in great part for the successful completion of this dissertation. Doctor E. G. Fitzgerald, O. P. and Doctor S. J. Grabowski most kindly collaborated in the correction of the text and offered many valuable suggestions.

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## INTRODUCTION

This study is submitted as a partial exposition of the historical testimony of Christian Tradition to the apologetical aspects of the visible sanctity which is essential to the Catholic Church as the one religious society of divine institution. First, the traditional recognition of this visible sanctity as an apologetical fact in the Church will be briefly stated. Second, the dual role which this fact exercised in the historical apology of the Christian World will be presented in outline through pertinent summaries of selected representative authors of each age prior to the Council of the Vatican. First, this visible sanctity of the Church will be considered in its role as a Note of the true Church. Second, it will be studied as a Motive of Credibility for the true Religion.

The Catholic Church is traditionally recognized as being essentially holy in a visible and eminent way. This holiness is essential to the Church because it is the one visible religious society which the divine Christ instituted upon this earth to the end that he might effect the sanctification and salvation of all men by making the necessary application to them of the efficacious and sanctifying virtue of his redemptive sacrifice through means of his doctrine, his sacraments and his vicarious rule.

By reason of the fact that this Church is in itself a supernatural society and realizes its supernatural end through the exercise of supernatural means, man can not fully understand either the Church itself or the means of salvation in themselves by his unaided natural reason. This knowledge is possible only through an act of divine faith. On the other hand, because man is a rational being, he can not make this necessary act of supernatural faith properly ex-



cept he first be morally certain that this particular Church is that which Christ instituted and that the Religion proposed in this Church as revealed is from God.

This necessary natural knowledge of these facts comes to man through certain visible properties which are found only in the Catholic Church. Christian Tradition shows the existence of such visible properties as conclusive arguments which demonstrate with moral certitude this requisite factual data. Their probative value rests primarily in two characteristics. First, in the judgment of human experience these visible properties are not and can not be effects of any created cause. They afford proof therefore of the divine intervention in favor of the Church. Second, in the testimony of history these same properties are the exclusive possession of the Catholic Church. They afford proof, therefore, that God has intervened only in this one Church. It is the purpose of this dissertation to point out the traditional acceptance of the fact that the naturally knowable evidence which these properties afford to all men is sufficient both to secure the identification of the Catholic Church as the legitimate Church of Christ and to establish the credibility of the Christian Religion as proposed in this Church.

There are two ways in which a Catholic may approach the study of the Church. He may consider it theologically as it is known to him in the light of divine faith, or he may study it apologetically as it is naturally observable to human reason through the visible properties which necessarily pertain to it as the one visible religious society of divine institution.

It is this latter method which is to be followed in this summary exposition of the traditional Catholic answer to the two fundamental problems of fact which constitute the heart of the necessary preamble to divine and Catholic faith. The first problem is to determine the particular Church which is of divine institution. The first question,

therefore, which must be considered in this study is the question of fact: can a man naturally know that the Catholic Church is the one true Church of divine institution from the fact that it alone is visibly and eminently holy as a religious society. The second problem is to determine the credibility of the Christian Religion as proposed in this Church. The second question of fact, therefore, which must be considered is: can a man naturally know that this religion is from God and therefore credible because it is proposed by the Church which is holy in a visible and eminent way.

These two questions of fact were definitively answered by the Church itself in the definitions of the Vatican Council apropos to this matter. It is here proposed to deal with the historical backgrounds of these definitions and to search out in the pages of representative apologists the various uses of the visible holiness of the Catholic Church both as a Note of the true Church and as a Motive of Credibility for the Christian Religion.

This study is not intended as an exhaustive and all out presentation of the teaching of each individual author. It is hoped, however, to point out the fact that the constant answer of this tradition is identical with that which was definitively stated by the Council of the Vatican. The method of presentation necessitates a continued repetition of identical fact and argument with but slight variations in emphasis and method. This repetition will serve to emphasize the fact that the Council of the Vatican has most aptly given expression to the constant tradition of the Christian World that the Catholic Church can be known by all men as the true Church of divine institution and that the Christian Religion can be known as credible because this Church is holy in a visible and eminent way.

The following outline is submitted as suggestive of the proposed presentation of this historical testimony to the

fact that the visible sanctity of the Catholic Church is at one and the same time a Note of the true Church of Christ and a Motive of Credibility for the Christian Religion as proposed in this Church.

1. Visible essential sanctity as an apologetical fact in the Catholic Church.
2. Historical witness of Christian Tradition to the apologetical role this visible sanctity exercises as a Note of the Church.
3. Historical witness of Christian Tradition to the apologetical role this visible sanctity exercises as a Motive of Credibility for the Christian Religion.

There are three official pronouncements of the Church which may be cited in this connection as a precise summary of the teaching of Catholic Tradition outlined in this thesis.

1. Visible sanctity as a **FACT** in the Catholic Church. The Symbol of Constantinople explicitly stated that the Church is holy.<sup>1</sup>
2. Visible sanctity as a **NOTE** of the true Church of Christ. The Council of the Vatican, while not explicitly naming the visible sanctity of the Church as a Note, expressly stated that the true Church of Christ is so marked by God that all men can know it as the one Church of divine institution.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Symbolum Nicaeno-Constantinopolitanum, Mansi III, 565 (D. B., n. 86) *Et Unam, sanctam, catholicam et apostolicam.*

<sup>2</sup>C. Vaticanum, Sess. III, cap. 3. (D. B., n. 1793), *Deus per Filium suum unigenitum Ecclesiam instituit, suaeque institutionis manifestis notis instruxit, ut ea tanquam custos et magistra verbi revelati ob omnibus posset agnosci.*

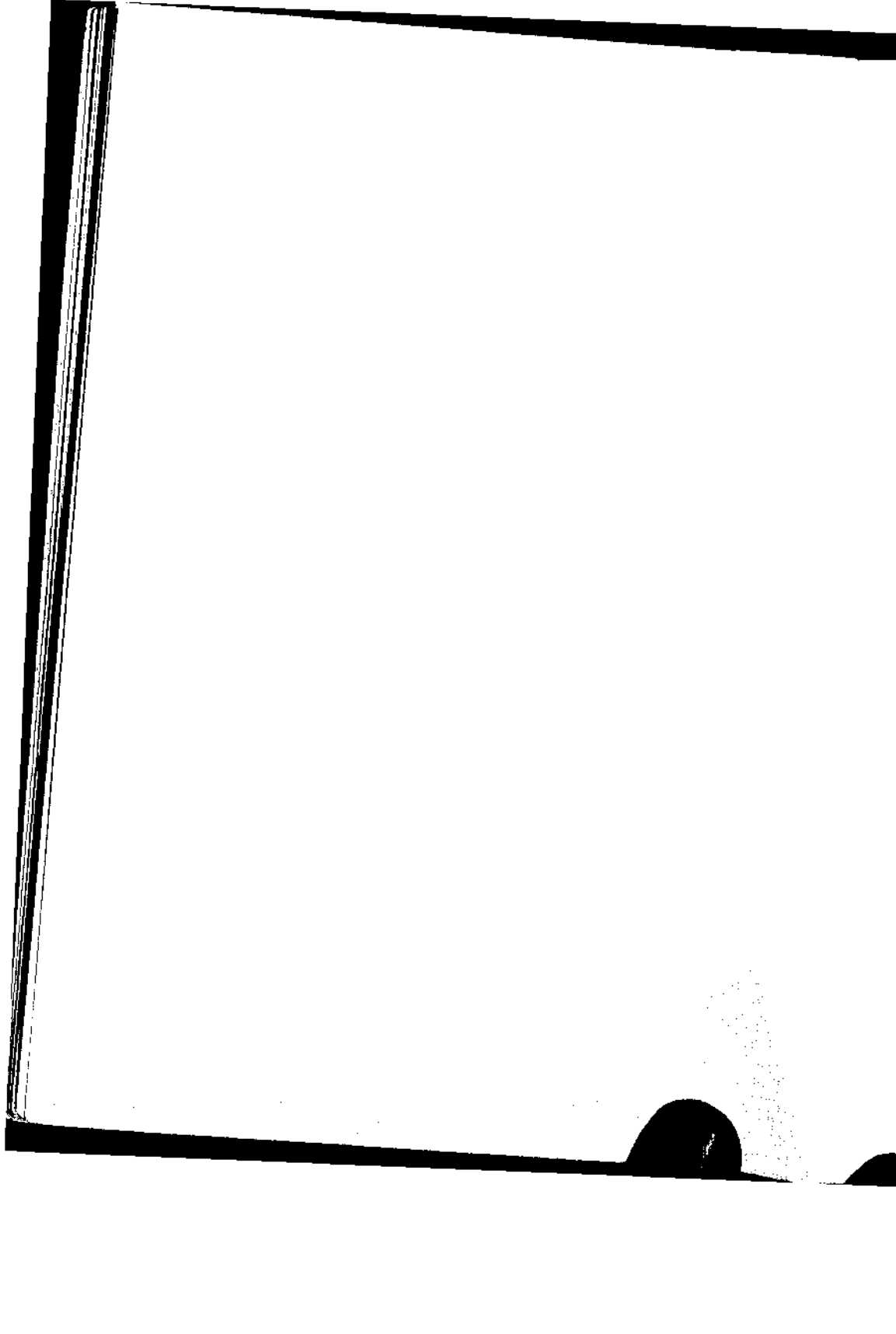
Cfr. etiam. P. Pius IX, Ep. ad episcopos Angliae, AAS. 2, 557, 1864. *Vera Jesu Christi Ecclesia quadruplici nota, quam in Symbolo credendam asserimus, auctoritate divina constituitur et dignoscitur.*

3. Visible sanctity as a MOTIVE of Credibility.  
The Council of the Vatican likewise stated that the Church itself by reason of its eminent visible sanctity is a great and perpetual motive of credibility."

These three citations are advanced in this present context as manifestative of the uniformity and constancy of the teaching of the Church in this present question. The following pages are intended as an outline sketch of the historical background of these statements of fact.

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"C. Vaticanum, Sess. III, cap. 3. (D. D. 1794.) *Ecclesia per se ipsa, ob suam nempe admirabilem propagationem, eximiam sanctitatem et inexhaustam in omnibus bonis foecunditatem, ob catholicam unitatem invictamque stabilitatem magnam quoddam legationis testimonium irrefragabile.*



## CHAPTER 1.

### THE VISIBLE SANCTITY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

The Catholic Church, in the witness of the historical tradition of the Christian world, is a perfect visible society whose proximate end is the sanctification of all men. The final cause, therefore, of this religious society necessitates that the essential parts, namely the means to this end and the members, be visibly holy. The apologetical value of this visible property of the Catholic Church lies in the fact that all men can know this observable sanctity of means and membership as a miraculous perfection of the social order possessed exclusively by this one Church. This holiness consists in a firm adherence to God and a firm aversion of evil.

The determination of the apologetical fact of the visible sanctity of the Catholic Church is possible only through a demonstration of the observable holiness of the essential parts of this religious society. The question which is to be stated here in an affirmative answer is: do the means of sanctification in the Church, namely its doctrine, sacraments and rule, and the members of this Church manifest the presence of the Spirit of God in the Catholic Church, the union of this Church with God.

The first question to be solved, therefore, is the question of fact: has the Catholic Church the efficacious power to sanctify its members through the instrumentality of its visible doctrine, sacraments and rule. Cardinal Dechamps briefly states that this is the first question. He also indicates the answer.<sup>1</sup> The second question to be answered is:

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<sup>1</sup>La Question Religieuse, Oeuvres, IV, p. 144. Qu'on ne s'imagine donc pas qu'en affirmant son caractère de sainteté, l'Eglise prétende affirmer la sainteté de tous ceux qui lui appartiennent. Non, elle sait

are the members of the Church holy because they cooperate with the sanctifying power communicated through these means.

The internal holiness of the Church, which is constituted by the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church, is externally manifested to all men through the eminent sanctity observable in the various parts of the Church. This is historically attested to by the fact that the Catholic Church has always proposed the holy doctrine of Christ in an indefectable manner, has always administered his sacraments with fidelity and has always directed the followers of Christ according to his spirit in their public profession of the faith, and their public reception of the sacraments of the Church.

These visible manifestations of the presence of the Spirit of God in the Catholic Church are not, therefore, mere human causes for they derive their efficacious force from the divine activity of the Holy Spirit operative in this on Church. Nor are the moral effects visible in the cooperative members the results of unaided human efforts. The eminent moral virtue evidenced only in the Christian life is witness to the transcendent causality of the means through which this transformation was accomplished.

This property of visible holiness is an apologetical fact because it is a naturally observable quality in this society which exceeds all human power and necessitates the recognition of the operation of the divine power in the Church.

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qu'en entrant dans son sein, nul ne perd son libre arbitre: que non seulement ses membres, mais ses chefs. Mais son Chef supreme, restent libres de vivre selon leur foi, et qu'ils rendront compte a Dieu de l'usage qu'il auront fait de cette liberte. Mais elle sait aussi et elle proclame bien haut, que Dieu fait jaillir en elle toutes les sources de la saintete: que sa doctrine en montre la voie; que son culte et ses sacrements nous donnent la force d'y marcher: et que l'Esprit dont Jesus Christ lui a promis la presence, prouve lui-meme en elle, cette presence par ses oeuvres, par son action divine, par la vie surnaturelle qu'il communique aux ames.

It is not proposed to afford a lengthy demonstration of this fact as in the Catholic Church. It will suffice to point out here the significance which Christian Tradition attached to this visible holiness. This brief statement of fact will serve as a definition of this traditional concept which played such an outstanding role in the traditional and popular apologetics of the Church.

A. VISIBLE SANCTITY OF MEANS.

The essential visible holiness of means, which is a requisite condition for an essentially holy society, demands that the Catholic Church be in actual and full possession of all the efficacious means necessary for the attainment of the proper end of the society, the sanctification of its members to the glorification of God. The consensus of Christian Tradition establishes three such means of sanctification as essential to the Church as a society. These three means are doctrine, sacraments and rule. They must be visibly holy if the Church is to be visibly holy. Each of these means of sanctification in the Church must be studied briefly to the end that the apologetical definition of each may be determined.

*1. Doctrine.*

Apologetically considered, the doctrine proposed in the Catholic Church is that body of truths which the teaching Church offers man as the true principles of the intellectual and moral order. Both historical testimony and experimental knowledge witness to the fact that this doctrine is: first, free from all error; second, free from all inducement to evil; and third, conducive to a more perfect form of life than is possible to unaided human nature. The fact of this doctrine, therefore, is indicative of its divine origin.

The witness of the early Christian Tradition demands that this definition be applied to the doctrine taught by the



Catholic Church. The primary emphasis of this tradition is placed on the observable fact that this doctrine of the Church teaches man a holy way of life that is proper to the Christian Religion.

Saint Clement of Rome explicitly exhorted the members of the Christian community to a sincere fidelity to the high moral demands of their religious beliefs. As Christians, he wrote, they must fulfill all those things which are required of the saints of God. He expressly excluded from the Christian conduct all acts of impurity, drunkenness, cupidity and pride. He insisted, moreover, that all excell in the virtue of continence, humility, fraternal charity and abound in good works of every kind.<sup>2</sup> Saint Clement of Rome, therefore, lists certain vices which are contrary both to sanctity of life and the doctrine proposed in the Church as well as states certain virtues which are both necessary to sanctity of life and of Christian precept.

Saint Ignatius of Antioch made explicit reference to the sanctifying influence of the doctrine taught in the Church. The faith, he said, draws the Christian to God and ornaments his soul with the virtues inculcated in the Christian precepts.<sup>3</sup> This sanctifying influence of the Church's teaching is emphasized by the observation that no other creed has this power to draw man toward God or to unite him with the redeeming sacrifice of Christ.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup>I Ep. ad Corinthios, cap. 30. Cum igitur portio sancti simus, faciamus omnia, quae ad sanctitatem pertinent, obtreccationes deviantes, impuros ac impudicos complexus, ebrietates, novarum rerum studia, concupiscentias abominandas, detestandum adulterium, abominandam superbiam. . . Induamus concordiam, humiles, continentes, ab omni susurro et obtreccatione procul recedentes, operibus, non autem verbis nos justificantes.

<sup>3</sup>Ep. ad Ephesios, cap. 9. fides autem vestra vos sursum trahit, caritas vero via deducens ad Deum. Estis igitur et viae cometes omnes, deiferi et templiferi, christiferi, sanctificari, per omnia ornati in praeceptis Jesu Christi;

<sup>4</sup>Ep. ad Philadelphenses, cap. 3. Ne cretis, fratres mei. Si quis schisma facientem sectatur, regni divini hereditatem non consequitur; si quis ambulat in aliena doctrina, is non assentitur passioni.

Justin, Martyr, illustrates this point in a brief commentary on the great commandment of Christian love. The observance of the two precepts of love of God and love of neighbor, wrote Justin, includes all justice and piety, and excludes all sin. Thus the doctrine of Christ, which is proposed to man by the Church, aids in the sanctification of those who make practice of its teachings.<sup>5</sup>

Origen likewise made special reference to the sanctifying power of the Christian doctrine. This doctrine of the Church, which gives to man the true doctrine of Christ, affords man the correct principles of moral life and enables him to direct his conduct in a manner pleasing to God and without danger of error.<sup>6</sup>

In the writings of the great Saint Augustine, this apologetical fact of the visible holiness of Christian doctrine is very clearly expressed. Saint Augustine made two observations concerning the doctrine of the Church which have a direct bearing on this immediate point. First, he insisted that this doctrine is absolutely free from all moral errors and degrading teachings.<sup>7</sup> Second, he pointed out that it

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<sup>5</sup>Dialogus cum Tryphone, cap. 93. Unde mihi praeclare a Domino nostro et Salvatore Jesu Christo dictum videtur, duobus praeceptis justitiam omnem et pietatem adimpleri. Diliges Dominum Deus tuum ex toto corde tuo, ex totis viribus tuis, et proximum sicut teipsum. Nam qui ex toto corde et ex totis viribus diligit Deum, is cum pie sententias plenus sit, nullum alium deum colet, sed tamen angelum etiam illum, Deo jubente colet, quem ipsi Dominus et Deus diligit. Et qui proximum diligit tanquam seipsum eadem illi bona ac ipse optabit. Nemo autem sibi mala evenire vult. Igitur qui proximum diligit eodem ille ac ipse sibi praecabitur a navabit. . .

<sup>6</sup>Contra Celsus, Lib. IV, cap. 5. Quod si quempiam per praesentiam virtutis Dei et per verbi inter homines adventum dici mutatum oporteat, dicere non verebimur e malo in bonum, ex libidinoso in temperantem, e superstitioso in pium mutare, quicumque Dei Verbum in suam animam veniens recepit.

<sup>7</sup>De Civitate Dei, Lib. 2, cap. 28. Nihil in Christianis Ecclesiis turpe et flagitiosum spectandum, imitandumque proponitur: ubi veri Dei aut praecepta insinuantur aut miracula narrantur, aut dona laudantur, aut beneficia postulantur.

is only in the Catholic Church that this doctrine is publicly taught to all men. It is in the Church, he wrote, that men learn how to live this present life as a preparation for the future life of beatitude with God.<sup>8</sup>

The apologetical value of these two observations on the public doctrine of the Church is likewise explicitly commented upon by Saint Augustine. This doctrine is observable to all men, whether they be Christians or not, as the holy teaching of the Church which clearly indicates to men the one way of life which is pleasing to God. Many men, he wrote, enter the Church to scoff at the Christian Religion but are converted by what they see and hear. Others are overcome with shame or fear at their former dispositions.<sup>9</sup>

The sanctifying power of Christian doctrine as expressed by Saint Augustine is well illustrated by means of a brief commentary on the great commandment of love of God and neighbor. The observance of this commandment leads to the life of eternal beatitude for, said Saint Augustine, if one loves God all things proceed in good and no thing will be able to separate one from God. This life of union with God in love, which is inculcated by this divine precept, is the life of holiness.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup>De Civitate Dei, Lib. 2, cap. 28. Quia populi confluant ad ecclesias casta celebritate, honesta utriusque sexus discretionem: ubi audiant quam bene hic ad tempus vivere debeant, ut post hanc vitam beati semperque vivere mereantur: ubi sancta Scriptura justitiaeque doctrina de superiore loco in conspectu omnium personante, et qui faciunt, audiant ad praemium; et qui non faciunt, audiant ad iudicium.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid. Quo etsi veniant quidem talium praeceptorum irrisores, omnia eorum petulantia aut repentina immutatione deponitur, aut timore vel pudore comprimitur.

<sup>10</sup>De Moribus Ecclesiae, cap. 11. Maximum ergo quod ad beatam vitam ducit, primumque mandatum est, diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo et anima et mente. Diligentibus enim Deum omnia procedunt in bonum. Quamobrem paulo post idem Paulus (Rom. 8, 28sq) certus sum, inquit, quod neque mors, neque vita, neque angeli, neque virtus, neque instantia, neque futura, neque altitudo, neque profundum, neque creatura alia potest nos separare in charitate Dei, quae est in Christo Jesu Domino nostro. Si igitur diligentibus Deum

The Church, moreover, in the exercise of its teaching office makes the needed particular applications of this summary commandment to the various aspects of Christian life. Each phase of human life enters into the consideration of the Church and merits the particular direction of which it has need.<sup>11</sup> This detailed application of the primary law of Christianity which the Church makes serves to illustrate the sanctity of this Church in its official teaching of the doctrine of Christ.

These few citations from the earlier periods of Christian Tradition will suffice to establish the definition of the visible holiness of the doctrine of the Catholic Church as an apologetical fact. This definition requires that this doctrine be naturally observable as: first, free from all error;

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omnia procedunt in bonum: et summum bonum, quod est etiam optimum dicitur, non modo diligendum esse nemo ambigit, sed ita diligendum ut nihil amplius diligere debeamus. . . quis, quaero, dubitaverit, his omnibus constitutis et firmissime creditis, nihil nobis aliud esse optimum, ad quas adipiscendum postpositis caeteris festinare oporteat, quam Deum. Item si nulla res ob ejus charitate nos separat quid esse non solum melius, sed etiam certius hoc bono potest?

<sup>11</sup>De Moribus Ecclesiae, cap. 30. Tu pueriliter pueros, fortiter iuvenes, quiete senes, prout cujusque non corporis tantum sed et animi actas est exerceas ac doces. Tu feminas viris suis, non ad explendam libidinem, sed ad propagandam prolem et ad rei familiaris societatem, casta et fidei oboedientia subijcis. Tu viros conjugibus, non ad illudendum imbecilliorum sexum sed sinceri amoris legibus praeficis. Tu parentibus filios libera quadam servitute sub vinculo firmitate atque acriore quam sanguinis nectis. Tu dominis servos, non tam conditionis necessitate quam officii delectatione doces adhaerere. Tu dominos servis, summi Dei communis Domini, consideratione placabiles et ad consulendam quam coercendum propensiores facis. Tu cives civibus gentes gentibus et prorsus homines primorum parentum recordatione, non societate tantum, sed quadam etiam fraternitate conjungis. Doces reges prospicere populis, mones populos se subdere regibus. Quibus honor debeatur, quibus affectus, quibus reverentia, quibus timor, quibus consolatio, quibus admonitio, quibus cohortatio, quibus disciplina, quibus objurgatio, quibus supplicium, sedulo doces, quemadmodum et non omnibus omnia et omnibus caritas.

second, conducive to the highest sanctity of man; and third, superior to any conceivable human system of thought. The realization of these three conditions in Catholic doctrine has been pointed out as recognized by representative authorities of the early ages of the Church. The constancy of this recognition throughout the succeeding ages will be taken up in the subsequent chapters which treat of the traditional usage of this holiness of doctrine in the Christian apology.

## 2. *Sacraments.*

The sacraments are the seven visible signs which Christ instituted and placed in his visible Church as the ordinary channels of that divine grace which unites man to God in the supernatural Christian dispensation.

Saint Thomas has defined a sacrament as a sign of a sacred thing, which effects the sanctification of man.<sup>12</sup> This is the theological definition expressive of the fact that the sacraments both signify and communicate grace to man and in this wise effect his sanctification.

The apologetical signification of a sacrament lies in the fact that they visibly signify or manifest the divine grace which they confer and indicate the effect which follows from their worthy reception.<sup>13</sup> These sacraments, in as much as they signify an effect in excess of the natural causality of the material sign employed, require the recognition of the intervention of the power of God.

Lactantius stated that in his day the Catholic Church alone had preserved the true Christian cult.<sup>14</sup> The Christian

<sup>12</sup>Summa Theologica, III, q. 62, a. 2. signum rei sacrae, inquantum est sanctificans homines.

<sup>13</sup>Tertullian De carnis Resurrectione, cap. 8. caro abluitur ut anima emaculetur: caro ungitur, ut anima consecretur: caro signatur, ut anima muniatur: caro manus impositione adumbratur, ut et anima illuminetur: caro corpore et sanguine Christi vescitur, ut et anima de Deo saginetur.

<sup>14</sup>Instit. Div. 1, 4, cap. 30. Sola Catholica Ecclesia est, quae verum cultum retinet.

cult, wherein man gives expression of his true relationship to God, is built around the sacraments and is centered primarily in the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharistic sacrifice-sacrament. These rites and religious exercises further the sanctifying influence of the sacraments in the lives of the members of the Church and thus are contributing forces in the sanctification of man. In as much as they are visible expressions of the relationship of God and man, they are visibly holy.

### *3. Rule.*

The final means of sanctification which is essential to the Church as a visible religious society is the authoritative, vicarious rule which is vested in the Church. Through the medium of this rule, the Church directs its membership in the true interpretations of doctrine and in the proper use of the sacraments and religious rites.

The apologetical significance which tradition attributes to this part of the visible Church lies in the fact that this rule visibly assists the Christian people in the way of life proper to the Catholic Church, namely in the way of sanctification and salvation.

Saint Ignatius of Antioch recognized the fact of the visible holiness of the legitimately constituted authority of the Church. He publicly admonished the Ephesians that they should accept the pastors of the Church as the visible representatives of Christ and promised them that through their subjection to their bishops they became subject to God.<sup>15</sup>

This visible sanctity to which Saint Ignatius had reference is the sanctity of office, not the personal sanctity of

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<sup>15</sup>Ep. ad Ephesios, cap. 6. quemcumque enim paterfamilias mittit ad gubernandam familiam suam, hunc ita accipere debemus ut illum ipsum, qui mittit. Manifestum igitur est, quod episcopum respicere oporteat ut ipsum Dominum. cap. 5. Scriptum est enim: Superbis Deus resistit. Studeamus igitur episcopo non resistere, ut simus subjecti Deo.

the occupant of that office in the Church. Saint Leo the Great emphasized this point by observing that this rule remains visibly holy despite the fact that the individual occupant is personally unworthy.<sup>16</sup>

Origen has very aptly expressed this apologetical fact by means of a comparison. The Church through its rule, he wrote, exercises in the spiritual order a function similar to that which the civil government fulfills in the state. The rule of the Church is directed toward the spiritual guidance of the members in the way of life determined by Christ. In as much as this exercise of the authority vested in the Church is a visible rule, it follows that it is also visibly holy.<sup>17</sup>

The apologetical fact of the visibly holy rule of the Church lies in the naturally observable fact that the disposi-

<sup>16</sup>Serm. 3, cap. 4. *Cujus dignitas etiam in indigno herede non deficit.*

<sup>17</sup>*Contra Celsum, Lib. 8, cap. 75. Nos etiam admagistratus pro patria gerendos horatur Celsus, si ad tuendas leges pietatemque id facto opus est. Sed nos qui scimus in singulis civitatibus aliam esse patriam a Verbo Dei constitutam eos ut Ecclesias regant hortamur, qui potentes sermone et quorum mores sani sunt. Qui dignitates amant, eos repudiamus: cogimus vero illos qui prae multa modestia communem Ecclesiae Dei curam in se facile recipere nolunt. Itaque qui nobis sapienter praesunt, id ille coacti faciunt, coacti, inquam, a magno illo Rege, quem Dei Filium Deum que Verbum esse persuasum nobis est. Quod si qui in Ecclesia praesunt, hoc est Ecclesiae vocati antistites, ille quae secundum Deum est patriae, recte praesunt, aut ex praescriptis a Deo legibus praesunt, propterea ille nullo modo ab humanis contaminantur legibus. Neque etiam ea causa Christiani magistratus recusant, quod publica vitae munia refugiant: sed quod se diviniore et magis necessario Ecclesiae ministerio ad hominum salutem se servent. *Necessarium simul et justum hoc ministerium est.* Omnium curam gerunt: eorum quidem qui sunt intus, ut in dies melius vivant: eorum vero qui sunt extra, ut loquantur et faciant quae pietate digna sunt, sicque Deum vero cultu prosequentes et quam plurimos possunt erudientes, toti Verbo Dei divinaque lege imbuti sint, et summo Deo consocientur per ejus filium, Deum, Verbum, et sapientiam et veritatem et justitiam, qui Deo conjungit quisquis in omnibus vitam Dei legibus consentaneam transigere statuit.*

tions of the Church are true interpretations and applications of the doctrine confided to the Church by the divine Christ.

E. VISIBLE SANCTITY OF MEMBERS.

The visible sanctity of the membership of the Catholic Church is a necessary requisite for the essential visible holiness of the Church as a true religious society. This is so because members are an essential constituent of a society.

The historical fact is that this membership of the Catholic Church has always been adorned with the moral excellence of the Christian life and the sublime glory of great saints and heroic martyrs. There have been those who have faithfully observed the commandments of God and lived in conformity with the laws of the Church. There have also been those who have earnestly striven to fulfill the counsels of Christ in a more perfect Christian life. This variation marks, not a distinction of spiritual life, but merely a gradation in the degree of individual perfection in this life. Hence all are holy and manifest the holiness of the Church with a proportionate clarity.

The apologetical fact of the visible holiness of these true members of the Catholic Church lies in the fact that this proper Christian mode of life is a superhuman perfection that is explainable only on the admission of the fact of the intervention of the power of God. This is more clearly manifested in the exemplary lives of the great saints and martyrs. This fact is emphasized by the historical records of the moral level of all human organizations.

Thus it may be said that the moral lives of the Christians manifest the holiness of the Church by means of which the Spirit of God has formed them in the high morality required by the precepts and counsels of God. This manifestation is recognized by Christians as an effect of the divine



operation in the souls of men. It is known by all men as an effect surpassing the natural powers of man, and as a unique phenomenon in the history of religion.

Saint Clement of Rome explained this fact of the superior virtue of the Christians by appeal to the sanctifying power of God. Man is not justified, this saintly leader of the early Church wrote, by his own powers, by his own wisdom or intelligence or piety or efforts. He is justified by the power of God in whom he has faith.<sup>18</sup>

Tertullian voiced this same conviction though he did not express it as fully as did Saint Clement. He emphasized the place of continued good works in the Christian life. Christians, he wrote, are made. They are not born such.<sup>19</sup>

Saint Augustine likewise continued this thought of Tertullian. He stated that it is the spirit of the individual which distinguishes the Christian from the heretic or schismatic or pagan. The distinction is amply illustrated by the example of the effect of fire on two substances. Gold is purified by fire, he wrote, while straw is destroyed by it. In a like manner suffering purifies the Christian, while it destroys the unbeliever.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup>Ep. ad Corinthios, cap. 32. Et nos igitur, ex voluntate ejus in Christo Jesu vocati, non per nos ipsos justificamur neque per sapientiam nostram aut intellegentiam aut pietatem aut opera, quae in cordis sanctitate operati sumus, sed per fidem, per quam omnipotens Deus ab initio omnes justificavit.

<sup>19</sup>Apologeticus, cap. 18. Haec nos risimus aliquando, de vestris fuis: fiunt, non nascuntur Christiani.

<sup>20</sup>De Civitate Dei, Lib. 1, cap. 8. Haec cum ita sint, quicumque boni et mali pariter adfficit sunt, non ideo ipsi distincti non sunt, quia distinctum non est quod utrique perpassi sunt. Manet enim dissimilitudo passarum etiam in similitudine passionum, et licet sub eodem tormento non est idem virtus et vitium. Nam sicut sub uno igne aurum rutilat, palea fumat, . . . ita una eademque vis irruens bonos probat purificat eliquat; malos damnat, vastat, exterminat. . . . Tantum interest, non qualia, sed qualis quisque patiatur.

Saint Thomas Aquinas restated this identical thought of Saint Augustine in the finesse of scholastic distinction. The deed which is performed, he wrote, must be distinguished from the mode in which it is performed. The deed may be common to all men. The mode of performance, however, is proper to each individual. Now the mode of the Christian in the performance of good works is of such evident superiority that it demands the assistance of divine charity. In this wise the superior moral life of Christians manifest the holiness of the Church.<sup>21</sup>

The superior virtue of the Christian membership, therefore, manifests the holiness of the Church of which they are an essential part. This manifestation of the sanctity of the Church is, as has been pointed out, made primarily in the proper Christian mode or form of life. Others may perform the identical material action but only the Christian manifests the intervention of the power of God in the mode according to which this action is performed.

While it is true that this visible holiness of the members of the Church is necessary in order that the Church itself be visibly holy as a society, this essential visible sanctity of the Church does not require either the essential holiness of all the members or the perfection in sanctity of those members who possess divine grace. The perfect holiness of the Church would require this exclusion of all sinners from the Church. The Church, however, is only essentially holy as a visible society on this earth. The perfection of its sanctity is reserved to the Church in heaven.

The presence of sinners among the membership of the Church is an unquestionable historical fact. Because they are real members of the Church on earth, this Church is not

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<sup>21</sup>Quodlibetales, 4, q. 10, a. 19. in operibus virtutum duo sunt attendenda: scilicet id quod fit et modum faciendi. Contingit autem idem factum quod fit secundum aliquam perfectam virtutem: sicut aliquis non habens iustitiam potest facere aliquod opus iustum. Sed si attendamus ad modum faciendi, ille qui non habet virtutem, non potest operari sicut ille qui habet;

perfectly holy as a society. In view of the fact, however, that the Church is not the cause of the evil in their lives, this personal unworthiness does not detract from the essential sanctity of the Church. The personal defection of these members, therefore, does not reflect on the means of sanctification in the Church, nor upon those members who are actually sanctified by the instrumentality of these means. The Church remains a holy visible society according to its essence.

Saint Augustine stated this problem very clearly. He presumed the clear fact that there are sinful members in the Church and proposed a distinction in the life of the Church as the solution. The reference to Saint Paul is contained in the Epistle to the Ephesians, chapter 5, verse 27. This distinction of Saint Augustine is that which exists between the Church in heaven which is perfectly holy and that on earth which is only essentially so. It is to be noted, however, that this Church on earth is perfectly holy as regards the means of sanctification and salvation. It is only in the members that there is found ignorance and infirmity.<sup>22</sup>

The controversialist, Sylvius, has given a scholastic explanation as to how the Church can embrace in its membership both saints and sinners and yet remain an essentially holy visible society. The saints, he said, dominate in the Church and thus the denomination of the Church as visibly holy is taken from this stronger part of the membership.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup>Lib. *Retract*, cap 18. *Ubiqumque in his libris commemoravi Ecclesiam non habentem maculam aut rugam, non sic accipiendum est, quasi jam sit, sed quae praeparatus ut sic, quando apparebit etiam gloriosa: nunc enim propter quasdam ignorantias et infirmitates membrorum suorum quotidie dicit: dimitte nobis debita nostra.*

<sup>23</sup>*Controversiorum*, 3, q. 2. a. 6. *Quando agitur de quantitate per subjectum extensa et sufficienter ad denominandum intensa. Sic partes pro majore sui parte dealbatus denominationem albus, si albedo ipsi insit sufficienter ad denominationem. Aliquin non a majore sed a potiori porta sumitur denominatio. Boni autem sunt potior pars Ecclesiae.*

The more fundamental and traditional explanation, however, is that while the Church is active in the formation of holiness, it in no wise cooperates in the personal deficiencies of uncooperative members.

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The visible sanctity which is required by the essence of the Visible Church of Christ, therefore, consists in the naturally observable fact that this one Church is in actual possession of all the apt and necessary means of sanctification and numbers in its membership a certain proportion of persons who have actually been sanctified by the instrumentality of these means. In view of the fact that these means are instruments and this sanctification is an effect superior to the powers of the natural man, this visible sanctity manifests the active presence of the Spirit of God in the Church as operative through these means in the souls of the members.<sup>24</sup> Thus it may be said that the Catholic Church possesses all the necessary and efficacious means to sanctify and save man and is blessed with certain members who show forth in their lives the effects accomplished by their cooperative use of these means. The fact that these holy means and effects are visible only in the Catholic Church as super-human means and effects constitutes the apologetical fact which is contained in the Essential Visible Sanctity of the Church.

With this preliminary statement of definition, it will now be possible to consider the traditional apologetical role which this visible sanctity exercised in the years prior to the official statements of the Vatican Council. The Cath-

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<sup>24</sup>S. Augustine, Serm. 214. *Sanciam Ecclesiam, Matrem vestram, tanquam supernam Jerusalem, sanctam civitatem Dei honorate, diligite, praedicate. Ipsa est, quae in hac fide, quam audistis, fructificat et crescit in universum mundum, Ecclesia Dei vivi, . . . quae malos in fine separandos, a quibus interim discedit disparitate morum, tolerat in communione sacramentorum.*

olic Church itself, by manifesting the active presence of the Spirit of God through this visible holiness at one and the same time affords the medium of demonstration for the fact of its legitimacy as the one Church of divine institution and the associated fact of the credibility of the Religion proposed in it.

No other religious society can afford this proof of historical and rationally known fact of divine origin. First, therefore, this exclusiveness in possession of this factual proof of divine origin must be briefly considered. Then the role which this historical fact exercises in the solution of the two previously stated questions of: Is this Church the Church of divine institution. Can this religion which is proposed in this Church be believed on the authority of God revealing, may be studied in the historical answer of Christian Tradition.

## CHAPTER 2

### VISIBLE SANCTITY, A NOTE OF THE CHURCH.

The immediate problem which is to be considered here is the question of the means by which a man can know by natural reason that this particular Church is that which Christ instituted. This identification, according to the testimony of Christian Tradition, is effected through a rational judgment based on exclusive facts visible in this true Church. These facts evidence this Church as the one legitimate Church of divine institution and distinguish it from all other religious sects.

What is proposed here is a specialized study of the traditional usage of the visible property of essential sanctity as a "note" of Christ's Church. It must be observed at the outset, however, that the certain evidence of the Church afforded by a "note" is within the order of natural knowledge and is limited to the manifestation of the legitimacy of this church by means of facts which can pertain only to the true Church of divine institution. A "note", therefore, does not evidence the intrinsic nature of the Church itself.

There are three preliminary points which must be briefly stated before it is advisable to enter upon a detailed consideration of the traditional usage of this visible holiness of means and members in the historical apology of the Christian World. First, the nature of a note in general must be clearly understood. Secondly, this definition of a note must be verified of the visible holiness of the Church. Thirdly, the general trends of the traditional apology must be briefly sketched.

## A. A NOTE OF THE TRUE CHURCH.

The traditional concept of a "note" requires that it be an easily observable property which manifests to natural reason the fact of the legitimacy of the true Church in the concrete order of existence. The *raison d'être* of a note is, therefore, to make it possible for all men to identify this particular religious society in the present order of historical existence as the Church which Christ instituted.

In order to fulfil this apologetical role, a note must conform to four requirements. Firstly, a note must be an essential property of the Church of Christ. Secondly, this essential property must be easily known by all men as a super-human perfection. Thirdly, this visible preternatural property must be possessed exclusively by this one Church. Lastly, this property must manifest the fact that this particular Church is that which Christ instituted. It is this final characteristic which is of primary import in the concept of a note of the true Church. This is the formality which constitutes the property as a "sign" of the Church of Christ.

A note, therefore, must be a sign which has a necessary connection with the legitimate Church of Christ which it signifies and manifests as genuine to the natural reason of man. A note of the true Church is, therefore, an observable essential property which is naturally known as the exclusive perfection of one religious society that can not be attributed to any natural cause. A note, therefore, is a sign of the divine intervention in this one Church and is, therefore, a proof of the legitimacy or genuineness of this Church as the Church of Christ.

There are four such notes attributed to the Catholic Church by the Christian Tradition. This tradition is manifested in the earliest apologists in their constant use of the unity, sanctity, catholicity and apostolicity of the Roman Church as signs of its genuineness. By the fourth century all four of these notes were explicitly recognized as such.

It was not, however, until the seventeenth century that the theoretical aspects of the theory of the notes was enunciated. The nineteenth century witnessed the official pronouncement of the Vatican Council. But one of these notes, namely the visible sanctity of the Church, will be considered in this context.

B. VISIBLE SANCTITY AS A NOTE.

The testimony of Christian Tradition clearly affirms that the visible sanctity of the Catholic Church is a true note of the legitimate Church of Christ. A brief analysis of the fact of visible sanctity as it is seen in this Church, conducted in the light of the four prerequisites of a note, will illustrate this point of fact.

The fact is that the visible sanctity is a necessary and exclusive perfection of the Catholic Church by reason of its sole possession of all the efficacious means of sanctification and of the fruits thereof. This establishes the first requisite, namely the fact that it is an essential property, as well as the third requirement, namely that it is the exclusive perfection of this one Church. These two aspects have been pointed out in the first chapter. The two remaining conditions are likewise realized in the Apologetical Fact of the visible sanctity of the Catholic Church. This property is easily known by all men as a superhuman or preternatural fact. It also manifests the genuineness of this Church as a sign of its divine origin.

The principal argument of Christian Tradition that this visible holiness is easily knowable by all men is that of common experience. Special emphasis is placed on the fact that the sublime doctrine which is publicly taught in the Church and the exemplary moral lives of the Christian people are facts which men can not be unaware of in the natural honesty of their souls. Nor can they honestly account for this sublimity of doctrine or excellence of moral



life by appeal to purely natural causes. Experimental knowledge of other human philosophies and organizations is sufficient proof to establish the superhuman character of this visible holiness of the Catholic Church.

The witness of tradition to the fact that this visibly sanctity is a sign of the true Church and therefore is a manifestation of the legitimacy of the Church which possesses this property may be succinctly stated as follows. This preternatural visible sanctity of the Catholic Church is proof of the divine presence in this Church. It is, therefore, a sign in the Catholic Church manifesting it as the genuine Church of God's institution. The works of God can not support that which is false but only that which is true. The visible sanctity of the Catholic Church, therefore, evidences the Church as that of Christ.

The property of visible sanctity, therefore, is a note evidencing the legitimacy of the Catholic Church as the one Church of divine origin. The judgment of identification according to which this conclusion is reached may be stated in brief syllogistic form.

The Church which visibly manifests in its essential exclusive properties, effects attributable only to the intervening power of God, is the genuine Church of divine institution.

The Catholic Church alone is in possession of such properties.

Therefore: the Catholic Church alone is the true Church of God.

#### C. WITNESS OF CHRISTIAN TRADITION

The unquestionable fact is that the whole tenor of the Christian Tradition is unwavering in its recognition of the fact that the legitimacy of the Catholic Church as the one religious society of divine institution can be naturally known

by all men through the superhuman perfections which mark it as the work of God. The visible sanctity of this Church is one of four such marks which this tradition recognizes as a sign of the true Church.

There are two observations which should be made in this connection. The first is the fact that the explicit formulation of the definition of a note of the Church was not given expression until the controversies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries gave the necessary impetus for this theoretical development. The essential problem of this question was, however, fully appreciated by the Apologists and Fathers of the Church. Their recognition of this problem and their solution of this difficulty is evidenced in their writings by their use of certain specific visible facts in the Church as identifying signs. These signs were advanced as evidencing the divine origin and genuineness of the Church of Rome and as distinguishing this true Church from all other sects of human origin. It must not be forgotten, however, that the primary concern of the early Churchmen was the persuasion of the non-Christian people to accept the Christian Religion. Their apologies manifest this objective in the priority granted to the motives of credibility.

The second fact that it is well to remember in this connection is the variance of emphasis on one or more of these signs of the true Church. The immediate result of this variation is not the equivalent of a denial of one or the other of these notes. Rather it was the result of the particularization of the writer's immediate intention. Clement of Rome, by way of example, stressed the unity of the Church. Optatus in a later age placed the emphasis on the catholicity of the Church. In both cases, however, the Church in question was the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Rome. Thus while the exigencies of immediate controversy brought individual notes into prominence, the tradition is constant for all four of the marks of the true Church.

In the course of the three subsequent chapters, it is proposed to illustrate this traditional use of the visible sanctity of the Church as a Note of the true Church of Christ. The division of this consideration is that which is naturally suggested by the historical development of the Note theory. The authors selected as representative of their respective periods will be considered solely according to their use of visible holiness as an identifying and distinguishing mark of the Church of Christ.

The summary which is presented here of the fourth, fifth and sixth chapters will point out the general lines of the development of the Note theory and its foundation in the early traditions of apologetical literature.

The first five centuries of the Christian era are of great importance in this study because they witness to the pristine apology of the Church. The ten centuries immediately following this period are relatively unimportant in respect to this particular question. The explanation for this fact lies in the theological interests of this period. The sixteenth century, however, witnessed a reemphasis on the apologetical aspects of the Christian Religion. This late apology reassumed the great apology of the early Church and gave it expression in the exact form of the philosophical speculation. It is this period which formulated the theory of the Notes of the Church, a theory based on the facts recognized by the earliest of the Christian writers and confirmed in substance by the Council of the Vatican.

In the complete text, the witness of Christian Tradition to the valid use of the visible sanctity of the Church as an identifying and distinguishing note of the true Church of Christ is studied according to the following outline.

1. Apologetical literature prior to the Council of Constantinople. The more important indications of the use of this visible sanctity of the Church as a note is pointed out in the: Di-

dache, writings of Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, Athenagoras, Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen.

2. Council of Constantinople to the fifteenth century. This study is limited to: the statement of the Council of Constantinople, the writings of Lactantius, Cyril of Jerusalem, Epiphanius, Optatus and Augustine. The theological era of the Middle Ages is briefly considered in the apologetical work of Saint Thomas Aquinas.
3. Fifteenth century to the Vatican Council. This period is presented in the writings of the following authors: Torrecremata, Suarez, Bellarmine, Conet, Gotti, Sytvius and Perrone.

1.

The Note of visible sanctity as employed by the apologist prior to the Council of Constantinople.

The apologists of the second and third centuries were almost exclusively concerned with the practical aspects of the defense of the Church against paganism and heresy. Their emphasis was, therefore, placed on the demonstration of the divine origin of the Church. The problem of identifying the Church as that which Christ instituted was not presented to them by the opposition. These early apologists, however, did establish certain criteria according to which a true Christian might be known. Evidence of such criteria are to be found in the earliest of the apologetical literature of the Church.

The Didache and the Epistles of Saint Clement of Rome testify to the fact that the Church of Christ may be known by all men by the good moral life proposed by it. This holy way of life is portrayed as proper to the true Church and as

manifested in the Church by the sublime doctrine taught in the Church and the dutiful obedience of the Christian people.<sup>1</sup> The saints, said Saint Clement, are the great exemplars of the holiness of the Church.<sup>2</sup>

Saint Ignatius of Antioch insisted on this same criteria. Two ways of life are distinguished by Saint Ignatius according to their proper character.<sup>3</sup> The proper character of the true Church is that observable holiness of doctrine as confirmed by the sanctity of the members.<sup>4</sup> The heretical sects, on the other hand, are notable for their perverted doctrine and a corresponding immorality of life among their membership.<sup>5</sup>

Justin, Martyr, likewise proposed a criterion of the true Christian for the benefit of the pagan emperor. The teaching of the Church and the moral life of the individual Christian was the sure norm which Justin submitted to the emperor whereby he might know the true member of the Christian Church.<sup>6</sup>

Athenagoras advanced this same norm as the distinguishing feature between the Christian Church and the atheistic societies and pagan cults of his time. This doctrine of the Church and the moral life of the Christians was sufficient to prove that the Christian Church was not a cult such as these immoral societies.<sup>7</sup>

Irenaeus reasserted this norm in his efforts to point out the evident differences which existed between the Church of Christ and the gnostic sects. The Church alone, he af-

<sup>1</sup>Didache, cap. 5. Epistula ad Corinthios, cap. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Epistula ad Corinthios, cap. 5.

<sup>3</sup>Epistula ad Magnesios, cap. 5.

<sup>4</sup>Epistula ad Ephesios, cap. 14.

<sup>5</sup>Epistula ad Smyrnaeos, cap. 6.

<sup>6</sup>1a Apologia, cap. 3. Cfr. 1a Apologia, cap. 45; cap. 26; *Dialogus cum Tryphone*, cap. 119.

<sup>7</sup>Legatio pro Christianis, cap. 1. *ibid*, cap. 3, 4, 12, 32.

firmed, possessed the sanctifying doctrine of Christ<sup>8</sup> and numbered among its membership a great number of saints and martyrs.<sup>9</sup>

Tertullian advanced the evident fact of the superior discipline of the Church as an "index" of its character. This discipline, because it was proper to this one Church, manifested the genuineness of the Church to all men.<sup>10</sup> The effects of this discipline furnished further proof of this fact.<sup>11</sup>

Origen instituted a comparative study between the Catholic Church and the various religious sects.<sup>12</sup> He concluded that the sanctity of doctrine<sup>13</sup> and moral life proper to the Catholic Church<sup>14</sup> was sufficient to distinguish it from all other Churches.

2.

Testimony of tradition from the Council of Constantinople to the fifteenth century.

The Council of Constantinople most certainly defined the fact that the Catholic Church was holy.<sup>15</sup> Apologists are not in agreement as to whether or not this Council also defined that this holiness was a mark of the true Church.<sup>16</sup>

Lactantius asserted that the true Church of Christ could be known by the fact that it had preserved the true worship of God.<sup>17</sup> The historical records, he wrote, witness to the fact that only the Catholic Church has retained this

<sup>8</sup>Adversus Haereses, Lib. 4, cap. 33. Lib. 3, cap. 3.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid, Lib. 4, cap. 33.

<sup>10</sup>De Idolatria, cap. 24, De Praescriptionibus, cap. 43.

<sup>11</sup>Ad Nationes, cap. 4. *ibid.* cap. 5.

<sup>12</sup>Contra Celsum, Lib. 3, cap. 29, 30.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid. Lib. 1, cap. 21.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid. Lib. 2, cap. 45. Lib. 3, cap. 29.

<sup>15</sup>D. B. n. 86.

<sup>16</sup>Dieckmann, De Ecclesia I, p. 495.

<sup>17</sup>Institutiones Divinae, Lib. 4, cap. 30.

divinely established cult. From this fact, Lactantius concluded that this Church was the true temple of God.

Epiphanius was quite explicit to the effect that the visible holiness manifested in the doctrine and membership of the Church was the "form" and a "note" of the Church.<sup>18</sup> This note identified the Church as the genuine Church of Christ and distinguished it from all other religious societies.

Optatus asserted that the distinguishing feature of the Catholic Church was its possession of all the "signs" which Christ had promised to his Church.<sup>19</sup> The Catholic Church is visibly holy. No other religious society can be in possession of this sign.

Saint Augustine expressly introduced the question of man's natural knowledge of a Church as the Church of Christ.<sup>20</sup> This knowledge of the fact that the Catholic Church is the Church of Christ is derived from knowledge of visible facts to be found only in the Catholic Church. This Church has a proper form of life as is manifest from the unique morality of the Christian people.<sup>21</sup> This holiness of life distinguishes the Church from all other sects and demonstrates the difference between the right way of life as lived in the Church and the wrong way of life as evidenced in the other religious societies.<sup>22</sup>

The succeeding ten centuries are primarily theological in character. Studies on the Church were included in the tracts on the mystery of the Incarnation with the point of interest in the supernatural character of the Church. As a result of this view point, this period contains little of apologetical interest, and can be passed over in this particular study.

<sup>18</sup>Adversus Haereses, Lib. 3, cap. 25. Lib. 3, cap. 2: cap. 24.

<sup>19</sup>De Schismate Donatistarum, cap. 1.

<sup>20</sup>De Unitate Ecclesiae, cap. 1.

<sup>21</sup>De Moribus Ecclesiae, cap 30.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., cap. 34.

3.

Apologetical views of Visible Sanctity as a Note of the Church expressed over the period from the fifteenth century to the Council of the Vatican.

The fifteenth century witnessed the revival of a spirit of religious unrest which manifested itself in the establishment of a multitude of false religious societies. Each of these sects asserted the fact of its legitimacy as the Church of Christ. There is a certain agreement to be found in all these heretical bodies. With few exceptions, they were agreed that the one true Church of Christ was an invisible society. The one necessary condition for membership in this Church was an interior virtue. The external societies, on their part, were part of this true Church in so far as they preached the true faith and administered the sacraments of Christ.

The Catholic apologists responded with the reaffirmation of the true doctrine of the visible Church of Christ's institution. The controversies in which they engaged reintroduced the question of the identification of this Church of Christ in the midst of false sects. A summary of the apologetical use of the visible sanctity of the Church as a note will afford an illustration of the formalization of the note theory in the traditional doctrine of the Church.

Torrecremata directed his attack against the error that the Church was an invisible society composed of those who possessed interior virtue. Torrecremata pointed out the logical consequence of this doctrine. No man could know, apart from revelation, whether or not he was a member in the true Church which was necessary for salvation.<sup>22</sup> The indefectable holiness of the visible Catholic Church, on the other hand, clearly identified this Church as that of divine

<sup>22</sup>Summa de Ecclesia, Lib. 1, cap. 3.



institution.<sup>24</sup> This holiness, he said, was evident in the doctrine, cult and members of this one Church.<sup>25</sup>

Suarez in his apologetical tract proposed to demonstrate two facts, namely that the Church was a visible society and that this visible society instituted by Christ was the Catholic Church.<sup>26</sup> The true Church is visible as the Church of Christ through visible signs in which and by which it can be naturally identified.<sup>27</sup> Among these visible signs of the Church's identity, Suarez numbers the visible sanctity of the Catholic Church.<sup>28</sup>

Saint Robert Bellarmine raised the question of the recognition of the true Church of Christ in the midst of the various Protestant Churches.<sup>29</sup> How could all men know that the Catholic Church was the one Church of Christ? Saint Robert solved this problem with the clear statement of fact that the Church of Christ was a visible society clearly marked by naturally observable properties as the true Church.<sup>30</sup> These visible properties, he wrote, had to fulfill three requirements in order to be a true mark of the Church of Christ. Such a property had to be a proper perfection of this Church which was inseparably united to it and more easily known by man than the Church itself.<sup>31</sup>

The visible sanctity which pertained to the Church of Rome by reason of its sanctifying doctrine<sup>32</sup> and holy members<sup>33</sup> fulfilled these requirements. This visible sanctity, therefore, manifested the Catholic Church as the true Church of Christ to all men.

<sup>24</sup>Summa de Ecclesia, Lib. 1, cap. 4.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid, Lib. 1, cap. 4.

<sup>26</sup>T. 12, Dispt. 9, Sectio 8.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Controv. Lib. 4, cap. 1.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid, cap. 3.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid, cap. 2, cap. 13.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid. cap. 11, 12.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., cap. 13.

Gonet likewise stated that the observable holiness of the Church's doctrine,<sup>39</sup> cult,<sup>40</sup> and members,<sup>41</sup> was a sign whereby all men might know it as the legitimate Church of divine institution.<sup>42</sup>

Gotti rejected the two notes advanced by the reformers on the ground that they assumed the very point to be established.<sup>38</sup> Only the true Church, he said, possessed the true faith and administered the true sacraments. Proof of the legitimacy of a Church as that of Christ was to be sought in the possession by a Church of those visible perfections which Christ had promised his Church.<sup>39</sup> The visible holiness of the doctrine and members is one of the perfections which Christ promised his Church.<sup>40</sup> This holiness, wrote Gotti, is realized only in the Catholic Church. The doctrine taught in this one Church is free from all intellectual errors and moral impurities. The members observe the precepts of God's law as made known to them in the Church. This holiness of the members, as a proper perfection of the Catholic Church, is illustrated by Cardinal Gotti by the observation that the virtues of humility and obedience are proper Catholic virtues. Every other Christian sect, he stated, can be traced to pride and disobedience on the part of its founder.<sup>41</sup>

Sylvius stated the Catholic position in two propositions. First, the notes manifest the legitimacy of the Catholic Church as the Church of Christ. Second, the evidence furnished by these notes is valid only as proof of this fact.<sup>42</sup> The holiness of the Catholic Church as manifested in its

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<sup>38</sup>Clypeus Theologiae Thomisticae, T. 5, D. 3, art. 1.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid, D. 3, art. 2.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid, D. 3, art. 2.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid, D. 3, art. 2.

<sup>38</sup>Vera Ecclesia Christi, cap. 1.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid, cap. 1.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid, cap. 12.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid, cap. 14.

<sup>42</sup>Controversiorum, Q. 2, art. 2.

doctrine, sacraments and members<sup>43</sup> is a sign of the legitimacy of this one Church because it is a necessary and easily known perfection of this Church.<sup>44</sup> It is also a criterion according to which this Church is distinguished from all false sects which lack this moral perfection promised by Christ to his Church.

Perrone, in the years immediately preceding the Council of the Vatican, stated that the Church was a religious society instituted by Christ as the conservator and propagator of his teaching.<sup>45</sup> A Note of this Church, he said, must be easily known by man, proper to this Church, and essential to it.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, he added, they must be placed in it by Christ.<sup>47</sup> Perrone proposed two methods to establish the validity of the visible sanctity of the Catholic Church as a note.<sup>48</sup> The first method consisted in an analysis of the various visible parts of the Church as a demonstration of this sanctity. The second method, which he preferred, is the study of the visible manifestations of the interior life of the Church in the sanctity of the members. The fecundity of the Church in the spiritual life is the visible proof of the legitimacy of the Catholic Church as the true Church of Christ.

This brief survey of the apologetical testimony to the role which the visible sanctity of the Catholic Church actually played as a note of the true Church of Christ is sufficient to indicate the historicity of the definition of fact given in the Council of the Vatican. This Council defined the traditional teaching of the Church, namely that Christ marked his Church so that all men might know it as the custodian and teacher of his revealed truth.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>43</sup>Controversiarum, Q. 2, art. 6.

<sup>44</sup>Q. 2, art. 7, Q. 2, art. 3.

<sup>45</sup>Prælectiones Theologicæ II, cap. 1.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid. cap. 3.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid. cap. 3.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid. cap. 3.

<sup>49</sup>C. Vaticanum, Sess. III, cap. 3. [D. B. 1793]

## CHAPTER 3.

### VISIBLE SANCTITY, A MOTIVE OF CREDIBILITY.

The particular problem which is to be considered in this present section is the traditional view of the role which the visible sanctity of the Church exercised in the formation of the judgment of credibility in the apologetical literature prior to the Council of the Vatican.

The act of divine faith by reason of the fact that it is free and rational as well as supernatural, necessarily requires the preliminary and morally certain determination of the fact that the truths contained in the Christian Religion are worthy of intellectual acceptance on the evidence of authority. The nature of these truths renders impossible a judgment based on the intrinsic evidence of their truthfulness. There are, however, certain naturally knowable facts related to this revelation which enable a man to conclude that they are worthy of belief because they have their origin in God who can neither deceive or be deceived. These facts are miracles which evidence the divine origin of the Christian Religion and in this way testify to the truth of this religion. This evidence is limited to the determination of the credibility of these truths.

It is here proposed to outline the traditional usage of one of these motives of credibility and to illustrate from the writings of selected authorities the fact that the visible sanctity of the Catholic Church is a valid and traditional motive of credibility.

First, however, it is advisable to briefly state the prerequisite of a motive of credibility in respect to divine revelation and to determine how the visible sanctity of the Catholic Church realizes these conditions.

## A. MOTIVE OF CREDIBILITY

The traditional concept of the motive of credibility for divine revelation requires that it be a naturally knowable and miraculous fact necessarily related to the Christian Religion and demonstrative of the divine origin of this religion. The judgment of reason is enabled to conclude from the extrinsic evidence afforded by these divine facts in respect to the origin of the Christian Religion to the credibility of the truths so confirmed by God, their author. The argument of credibility, therefore, is one of authority, namely, the testimony offered by God through miraculous facts evidently wrought by the power of God in connection with the truths of the Christian Religion.

Christian Tradition specifies certain conditions as requisite for a valid motive of credibility. These necessary qualifications may be reduced to three fundamental headings. First, these facts must be easily known to all men. Second, these easily known facts must be evident miracles, that is they must be known as exceeding the powers of creatures and as resulting from the intervention of the power of God. Lastly, these easily known and miraculous facts must have an evident relation to the Christian truths.

This same Christian Tradition testifies to the validity of three motives as sufficient in themselves to demonstrate the fact of the divine origin of the Christian faith. These three sufficient motives are miracles, prophecies and the great motive of the Church itself as manifested through the miraculous facts evident in it. Two of these divine facts are external to this religion, namely the miracles and prophecies. The third is internal to this religion, namely the Church as witnessed to by its own miraculous characteristics.

There is also another type of motive which is recognized by this tradition. These motives are the intrinsic arguments which are from man himself and illustrate the conformity and the desirability of the Christian Religion to man

by reason of its conformity with the natural aspirations and desires of man's nature. The traditional view concerning these internal motives limits their value to an argument of persuasion and excludes all possibility of demonstration concluding with certitude of the fact of divine revelation.

B. VISIBLE SANCTITY, A MOTIVE

The unanimous testimony of Christian Tradition clearly establishes the validity of the miraculous visible sanctity of the Catholic Church as a motive demonstrative of the credibility of the Christian Religion because it affords a means of proof of the fact that this religion is revealed. It must not be forgotten that the Church itself is the real motive. The visibly holy Church is sufficient in itself to demonstrate the credibility of the Christian revelation proposed in it.

The conformity of the visible sanctity of the Church with the three necessary qualifications of a motive of credibility has been partially pointed out in the previous chapters. As has been pointed out, this visible sanctity of the Church is, in the authenticated testimony of history and human experience, a fact which is naturally knowable as a superhuman effect in the Church. The particular viewpoint according to which this property of the Church must be considered in this connection is that of a moral miracle. This visible sanctity, viewed as a moral miracle effected in the Church, affords virtual testimony on the part of God to the fact that this religion is revealed by God and therefore credible in the eyes of man.

The miraculous visible sanctity of the Church, therefore, is a mediate testimony on the part of God, the author of revelation, to the fact that this Christian Religion is the revealed religion. The judgment of credibility, according to which this conclusion is reached, may be briefly stated in syllogistic form.

The religion which God has stamped with evident and miraculous signs of his authoritative approval is manifested to man as credible, that is as apt for intellectual acceptance on the authority of God revealing.

The Catholic Church alone among the religious societies affords this factual proof of divine approbation of its claims.

Therefore: the Catholic Church alone is credible.

#### C. WITNESS OF CHRISTIAN TRADITION.

The general consensus of the voice of Christian Tradition is constant in its affirmation that the great motive of credibility for the Christian religion is the Catholic Church itself as it is naturally knowable as miraculously one, holy, catholic and apostolic. These miraculous properties of the Church conclude to the moral certitude of the divine origin of the Christian Religion, and therefore, to its credibility.

It is proposed to trace in outline the traditional presentation of this argument for the credibility of the Christian Revelation in so far as this argument is based on the one motive of the visible sanctity of the Catholic Church.

It might be well, however, to observe in this connection that the concept of credibility was not clearly apprehended before the late second century. The early third century, however, witnesses to a clear understanding of the implications of the judgment of credibility as a rational act distinct from the act of divine faith. Prior to this time, the apologists do not seem to have drawn a determined line between the preambles of faith and the act of faith itself. Nor do they seem to have distinguished between appetibility and credibility. Their design, however, is clearly the demonstration of the rationality of the act of faith by argumentation based on the factual presence of the miraculous works visible in the Church.

This tradition shall be considered in this thesis according to the following historical division. This division is based on the dominant apologetical method of the three periods which are to be considered.

1. The popular apology as presented throughout the first five centuries of the Christian era.
2. The theological approach which prevailed throughout the succeeding ten centuries.
3. The popular and classical apology which were prominent throughout the four centuries preceding the Council of the Vatican.

The summary which is here given of the eighth, ninth and tenth chapters will point out the historical continuity of the argument of credibility as based on the motive of the visible sanctity of the Church and as manifested in the apologetical methods in the above noted periods.

In the complete text, the testimony of Tradition to the validity of visible sanctity as a sufficient motive of credibility is considered in the following authors.

1. First period: The witness of Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, Epistle to Diognetus, Justin, Athenagoras, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen, Lactantius, Chrysostom, Ambrose, and Augustine.
2. Second period: The representative work of this age is the *Contra Gentes* of Saint Thomas Aquinas.
3. Third period: The Classical Method is studied in the works of Suarez, Bellarmine, Gonet, Luchésinio, Concina, Gotti, Sylvius and Perrone. The Popular Method is illustrated in the works of Lacordaire and Cardinal Dechamps.



## 1.

The motive of visible sanctity as advanced in the popular apology of the first five centuries of the Christian era.

The popular apology of this early era shows a marked emphasis on the miraculous holiness which pertained to the doctrine of the Church and the moral lives of her members. These are the two more prominent facts in the Church that are easily apprehended by the majority of common people. They constitute, therefore, a fitting basis for an apology which is directed to all men.

Saint Clement of Rome explicitly stated that the works which the Christians performed were both a testimony to their individual holiness of life and a sufficient reason for those who did not possess the faith to embrace it<sup>1</sup>. The miraculous character of these works of faith is likewise insisted upon by Saint Clement. It is interesting to note that he also urged the benefits which this religion afforded man as an incentive for the acceptance of it.<sup>2</sup>

Saint Ignatius of Antioch laid stress on the evident power which the doctrine of the Church possessed to sanctify all Christians.<sup>3</sup> He also insisted that the Christian faith alone could fulfill the desires which every man knew in his heart.<sup>4</sup>

The Epistle to Diognetus is of particular interest in this present connection. The letter is addressed to Diognetus in the express hope that the arguments presented there might induce him to become a Christian. The author of this letter advanced three arguments which are pertinent in this connection. First, he pointed out the notable difference which was evident between Christianity and Paganism.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Epistula ad Virgines, cap. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Epistula ad Corinthios, cap. 2.

<sup>3</sup>Epistula ad Ephesios, cap. 16.

<sup>4</sup>Epistula ad Magnesios, cap. 11.

<sup>5</sup>Epistula ad Diognetum, cap. 2.

Second, he brought out the actual influence of the Church in this reformation of morals.<sup>6</sup> Third, he commented upon the beneficial effects the pagan persecutions had accomplished in the Church.<sup>7</sup> The force of these arguments is explicitly stated. These facts, which all men see, are not of mere human accomplishment. They are evidences of the power of God operative in the Church, and proof of the truth of Christianity.<sup>8</sup> The author also touched upon the benefits which this Christian truth brought to a man, namely the satisfaction and joy of a good conscience before God.<sup>9</sup>

Justin, Martyr, expressly stated that the Christian faith is confirmed as true by certain testimony.<sup>10</sup> He further specified the nature of this testimony by the statement that it consisted primarily in the teaching of the Church and in the moral lives of her members.<sup>11</sup> The force of this testimony, he said, lay in the fact that they were the works of God and not the products of man.<sup>12</sup> The particular role which this testimony played in the religious affairs of man was, in the opinion of Justin, to establish the truth and justice of the Christian Religion in the minds of all men. Justin also remarked on the evident conformity of Christian doctrine with right reason,<sup>13</sup> and the fact that only in this true religion could man find the fulfillment of his desire for a pure and eternal life.<sup>14</sup>

Athenagoras expressly stated that facts in the Church demonstrate its veracity and origin.<sup>15</sup> The aspect of this

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<sup>6</sup>Epistula ad Diognetum, cap. 6.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid, cap. 6.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid, cap. 7.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid, cap. 10.

<sup>10</sup>1a Apologia, cap. 23.

<sup>11</sup>1a Apologia, cap. 3, *ibid.* cap. 14: *Dialogus cum Tryphone*, cap. 10.

<sup>12</sup>2a Apologia, cap. 10.

<sup>13</sup>*Dialogus cum Tryphone*, cap. 7.

<sup>14</sup>1a Apologia, cap. 8.

<sup>15</sup>*Legatio pro Christianis*, cap. 11.

demonstration which he stressed is to be seen in the moral life of the members. Particular emphasis is placed on the practice of virginity and chastity in the Christian community.<sup>16</sup>

Irenaeus enunciated the proposition that "where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God: where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church". The evident sanctifying power of the Church as established by its doctrine and holy members is the factual proof that the Catholic Church is the true Church of God. This argument is further strengthened by the observation that this holiness of doctrine and members is the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies.<sup>17</sup>

Tertullian stressed the sanctity of the Church as evidenced in its proper sanctifying doctrine<sup>18</sup> and holy membership.<sup>19</sup> The holiness of the members of the Church is further particularized by the observation that only Christians love their enemies<sup>20</sup> and are willing to sacrifice their lives in testimony to their faith.<sup>21</sup> Many men, he said, actually enter the Church because of the example of these martyrs. Tertullian also treated explicitly of the internal motive of man's desire to know and serve God. This desire, he said, has its perfect realization in the Christian Religion.<sup>22</sup>

Origen proposed the pertinent question as to whether a religion could be false which actually effected the moral transformation of men.<sup>23</sup> This moral conversion, which is effected in the Church, is proof of its divine origin.<sup>24</sup> The superhuman character of this moral transformation, he said,

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Adversus Haereses, Lib. 3, cap. 24.

<sup>18</sup>De Praescriptionibus, cap. 37.

<sup>19</sup>Apologeticus, cap. 2.

<sup>20</sup>Ad Scapulam, cap. 1.

<sup>21</sup>Apologeticus, cap. 50.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid. cap. 17: De Testimonio Animi, cap. 2.

<sup>23</sup>Contra Celsum, Lib. 2, cap. 49.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid, Lib. 1, cap. 64.

is clearly evidenced in the case of the martyrs of the Church.<sup>25</sup> This proper virtue<sup>26</sup> of Christian is, in the words of Origen, a divine reason for the truth of the Church.<sup>27</sup>

Lactantius emphasized the necessity of rational arguments and authentic testimony to the fact that the Christian Religion was true.<sup>28</sup> The sanctifying power of the Church as established by the morally transformed members of the Church<sup>29</sup> and the example of the martyrs<sup>30</sup> was, he said, sufficient proof of this fact. These acts, he testified, were impossible without the assistance of God.

Saint John Chrysostom proposed three divine facts as proof of the divine origin of the Christian Church.<sup>31</sup> First, he pointed out the rapid propagation of the faith; second, the radical moral transformation this Church effected; third, the manner in which this was effected. These three facts demonstrate the truth of the Church as the divinely established religion.

Saint Ambrose most aptly stated that "the witness of doctrine is virtue to the end that the teaching which is incredible to the world, might be made credible."<sup>32</sup> This evidence of Christian virtue is so clear, he said, that no man could deny the fact that the Christians were holy.<sup>33</sup>

Saint Augustine affirmed the fact that his faith in the Church was in a holy and catholic Church.<sup>34</sup> The eloquence of the divine facts of miracles and prophecies and the moral

<sup>25</sup>Exhortatio ad Martyrium, cap. 29.

<sup>26</sup>Contra Celsum, Lib. 1, cap. 7.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid, Lib. 1, cap. 1.

<sup>28</sup>Institutiones Divinae, Lib. 3, cap. 30.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid, Lib. 3, cap. 26.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid, Lib. 5, cap. 13.

<sup>31</sup>Quod Christus sit Deus, cap. 7, cap. 17.

<sup>32</sup>Epistula ad Romanos, cap. 1.

<sup>33</sup>Epistula 22, cap. 14.

<sup>34</sup>De Vera Religione, cap. 3.

lives of Christian people establish the credibility of the Church.<sup>35</sup> The Church itself is the great motive of credibility which Saint Augustine offered in favor of the Christian Religion. This Church, as known through its miraculous properties, the miracles worked in its favor and the prophecies fulfilled in its history, is proof of the divine origin of the Christian Religion.<sup>36</sup> The sanctity of this Church is principally manifested in the moral lives of the members.<sup>37</sup> This Christian life is not possible, said Saint Augustine, without the help of God.<sup>38</sup> Saint Augustine also advanced the confirmatory arguments of Christian peace<sup>39</sup> and happiness.<sup>40</sup> The apology of Saint Augustine is aptly summed up in his statement of fact that "we see the body, we believe the head" of the body. This visible body, the Church, is demonstrative proof of the truth of faith.

## 2.

Motive of visible sanctity as advanced in the theological era of the sixth to the fifteenth century.

The dominant interest in the theological aspects of Christianity practically excluded all apologetical effort during this period. There is, however, one notable exception. This work is the *Summa Contra Gentes* of Saint Thomas Aquinas.

Saint Thomas was clearly aware of the importance of the determination of the fact of divine revelation.<sup>41</sup> The moral transformation of the whole world as accomplished by the Church is the great miracle which Saint Thomas ad-

<sup>35</sup>*De Utilitate Credendi*, cap. 16.

<sup>36</sup>*Contra Ep. Manichaei*, cap. 4, 5.

<sup>37</sup>*De Civitate Dei*, Lib. 22, cap. 9.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid*, Lib. 4, cap. 29.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid*, Lib. 19, cap. 13.

<sup>40</sup>*De Moribus Ecclesiae*, cap. 3.

<sup>41</sup>*Summa Theologica*. II. II, q. 1, a. 4, ad. 2. *ibid* q. 2, a. 9, ad. 3.

vanced as sufficient proof of this fact of the divine origin of the Christian faith.<sup>42</sup> This conversion of the world is proof of the sanctifying power of God as operative in the Church and is manifested in the holiness of the members.<sup>43</sup> The natural desire of man to lead this life offered in the Church is a confirmatory argument for its truth.<sup>44</sup>

3.

The motive of visible sanctity as employed from the fifteenth century to the Vatican Council.

This period was marked by noted rationalistic tendencies in philosophy and religion. This trend is reflected in the apologetical literature of the Church. This apology takes two forms. The one a classical presentation; the other a popular apology modeled after the patristic method.

A. CLASSICAL APOLOGY.

This method derived its form of argumentation from the scholastic discipline. There is, moreover, a marked tendency to emphasize the arguments of miracles and prophecies rather than the visible Church itself.

Suarez stated that the miraculous properties of the visible Church testify to the truth of the internal character of this Church.<sup>45</sup> These visible properties are a demonstration of the authority of this Church. "I argue," he said, "from the properties of the true Church."<sup>46</sup> The conclusion

<sup>42</sup>Summa Contra Gentes, 1, cap. 6.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid, 1, cap. 6.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid, III, cap. 25.

<sup>45</sup>T. 12, D. 4, s. 3.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid. s. 4.

of this argument is the credibility of the Church.<sup>47</sup> The motive of visible sanctity is considered under the following headings. First, the holy doctrine; second, the true cult; third, the holiness of the members.<sup>48</sup>

Bellarmino stressed the fact that the visible properties of the Church are proof of its divine origin and by consequence, of its credibility.<sup>49</sup> These properties, however, do not evidence the Church as evidently true. They are valid only in the establishment of the evident credibility of the Church. The argument proposed is one based on the authority of the divine facts in the Church.<sup>50</sup>

Gonet stated that the credibility of the Church necessitated that the Church be proven worthy of belief by the extrinsic argument of trustworthy testimony.<sup>51</sup> The testimony of the miraculous sanctity of the Church is advanced under the following headings. First, the efficacious holiness of Christian doctrine; second, the conversions to the Church; third, the fidelity of the Christian faithful under persecution;<sup>52</sup> lastly, the martyrs of the Church.<sup>53</sup> These manifestations of holiness in the Church, wrote Gonet, are proof of the divine power as operative in the Catholic Church. They are, therefore, proof of the truth of this Church.

Lucchesinio explicitly distinguished the motive of faith from the motive of credibility. The motive of credibility, he said, is extrinsic and has as its end the judgment that this truth can be prudently believed, because of its divine origin.<sup>54</sup> The motive of visible sanctity which establishes

<sup>47</sup>Ibid, D. 4, s. 4.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid, D. 4, s. 4.

<sup>49</sup>Controv. Lib. 4, cap. 3.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid, cap. 11.

<sup>51</sup>Clypeus Theologiae Thomisticae, T. 5, D. 1, art. 8.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid, art. 1.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid, Art. 3.

<sup>54</sup>Demonstratio Impiorum Insania, Lib. 1, cap. 1.

the authority of the Church is considered in its manifestation through the doctrine<sup>56</sup> of the Church and the exemplary lives of the members<sup>57</sup> of the Church. This holiness of membership is especially evidenced in the great number of the Christian martyrs.<sup>57</sup> This divine fact of the visible holiness of the Church affords proof, wrote Lucchesinio, of the credibility of this Church of God.<sup>58</sup>

Concina expressly stated that the evidences of credibility are extrinsic to the truth itself and are valid only for the demonstration of the fact that this truth can be prudently believed on unimpeachable authority.<sup>59</sup> The authority of God as manifested in the divine fact of the visible holiness of the Church is such that it makes credible the sublime revelation of the Christian dispensation. The motive of visible sanctity is presented by Concina in the observable holiness of the doctrine and members of the Church.<sup>60</sup> "If it is holy and honest, it is from God: if it is from God, it is worthy of belief."<sup>61</sup>

Gotti explicitly stated that the credibility of the Christian Religion was based on the argument of extrinsic authority.<sup>62</sup> The authority to which he has reference is that of the Church itself as established by the divine facts which are visible in it. The visible holiness of this Church, when viewed as a moral miracle, is a demonstrative argument for the divine origin of the Christian Religion and, therefore, of its credibility.<sup>63</sup> This holiness is considered by Gotti as it is manifested in the doctrine of the Church, the holiness

<sup>56</sup>Demonstratio Impiorum Insania, Lib. 2, Signum 6.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid, Signum 8.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid, Signum 20.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid, Signum 26.

<sup>60</sup>Theologia Christiana I, cap. 5.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid, cap. 5.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid, cap. 5.

<sup>63</sup>De Vera inter Christianos Religiones Eligenda, cap. 1.

<sup>64</sup>Veritas Religionis Christianae VI, cap. 1.



of life of the Christian communities,<sup>64</sup> and the fidelity of this people under the threat and reality of persecution.<sup>65</sup>

Sylvius defined credibility as a judgment conclusive to the worthiness for belief of a truth which is supported by weighty arguments of authority.<sup>66</sup> The Christian Religion is, therefore, credible because, as he said, it is demonstrated as worthy of belief by the irrefutable arguments of divine facts.<sup>67</sup> He stated three holy facts visible in the Church as miracles testifying to the credibility of the Christian Revelation.<sup>68</sup> First, the conversions effected in the Church. Second, the constancy of the Christian faith in time of persecution. Third, the freedom of this faith from all error or discord.

Perrone expressly distinguished between the principal motives of credibility, namely the miracles and prophecies, and the subsidiary motives which confirm the testimony of these miracles and prophecies.<sup>69</sup> These secondary motives are enumerated as: first, sanctity of doctrine; second, the propagation and conservation of the faith; third, the constancy and fortitude of the martyrs.<sup>70</sup> The secondary position which this motive of visible sanctity holds in the apology of Perrone does not indicate that it is not a sufficient demonstration of the divine origin of the Church. This motive, as a moral miracle, affords a demonstrative argument of the credibility of the Christian Revelation.<sup>71</sup> The explanation for this classification lies in the fact that miracles and prophecies are in themselves more easily known as motives than is this sanctity of the Church.

<sup>64</sup>*De Vera inter Christianos Religiones Eligenda*, p. 151.

<sup>65</sup>*Veritas Religionis Christianae*, VI, cap. 2.

<sup>66</sup>*Commentarii*, Tom. 3, q. 1, art. 4.

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup>*Lib. Controversiarum*, III, q. 2, art. 2. *Commentaria* III, q. 1, art. 4.

<sup>69</sup>*Prælectiones Theologiae*, III, p. 300.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, I, p. 107: 139.

B. POPULAR APOLOGY.

This popular apology is a representation of the Patristic apology with minor adaptations necessitated by a later age. This method is concerned almost exclusively with the miraculous facts visible in the Church. The Church itself, through the miraculous manifestations of these visible facts, is the great motive demonstrative of the divine origin of the Christian Religion. This apology, it must be remembered, is directed primarily to the Christian people.

Lacordaire placed great emphasis on the testimony of the Christian conscience to the fact that only the Catholic Revelation had the power to realize its desires for God.<sup>72</sup> This, however, was not sufficient to demonstrate the divine origin of the Church. Nor was it sufficient to win men over to the Church. The Church, said Lacordaire, persuades men to accept the religion of Christ by demonstrative arguments of its divine origin.<sup>73</sup> Lacordaire classified the visible sanctity of the Church as one of the miraculous facts visible in the Church whereby the Church persuaded men to accept the Christian Religion. This sanctity, he said, is visible in the unique doctrine of the Church. This doctrine itself, he said, is proof of its unique excellence.<sup>74</sup> The efficacy of this doctrine in the sanctification of man is proof of its superhuman character.<sup>75</sup> This holiness is also evident in the sanctity of the members of the Church.<sup>76</sup> The holiness of membership is specified by a consideration of what Lacordaire called the "reserved virtues" of the Christian people.<sup>77</sup> These virtues, namely, humility,<sup>78</sup> chastity,<sup>79</sup> and

<sup>72</sup>Oeuvres Tome III Conference 27, p. 141.

<sup>73</sup>Oeuvres Tome I, Conference 2, p. 39.

<sup>74</sup>Tome I, Conference 8, p. 42. Tome III, Conference 21, p. 117.

<sup>75</sup>Tome III, Conference 28, p. 162.

<sup>76</sup>Tome I, Conference 14, p. 264.

<sup>77</sup>Tome III, Conference 22.

<sup>78</sup>Tome III, Conference 21, p. 27.

<sup>79</sup>Tome III, Conf. 22, p. 32.

charity,<sup>80</sup> are proper to the membership of the Church and effects of the divine power operative in the Church.<sup>81</sup> This is particularly true in the case of the great saints and martyrs.<sup>82</sup>

Dechamps proposed as his cardinal thesis the proposition that the Church itself directly demonstrates its divine origin and the fact of divine revelation.<sup>83</sup> The Church, however, is manifested by the divine perfections which mark it as the true Church of God.<sup>84</sup> The Church, therefore, as visibly holy is the great motive of credibility which is considered here. This visible sanctity is seen in both the means of sanctification,<sup>85</sup> namely the doctrine and cult of the Church, and in the holy members.<sup>86</sup> This sanctity is proof of the presence of the Spirit of God in the Church.<sup>87</sup> "Where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church" said Irenaeus. This demonstration of the fact of the presence of the Spirit of God in this Church is the equivalent of the demonstration of the divine origin of the Church or of the credibility of the Christian Religion. This thesis of Cardinal Dechamps is demonstrated both according to the arguments of history and experience.

This brief survey of the traditional teaching of the Catholic Tradition to the role which the visible sanctity of the Church actually exercised in the determination of the credibility of the Christian Religion, in the determination of the fact that this religion is revealed by God, is sufficient to establish the historicity of the definition of fact proposed in

<sup>80</sup>Tome III, Conf. 24, p. 71.

<sup>81</sup>Tome III, Conf. 22, p. 29.

<sup>82</sup>Tome III, Conf. 28, p. 164.

<sup>83</sup>Ouvres I, La Demonstration de la Foi, Cinquieme Entretien, p. 519.

<sup>84</sup>Ouvres I, Preface, 1er Entretien, p. 12.

<sup>85</sup>Ouvres IV, La question Religieuse, ch. 16, p. 144.

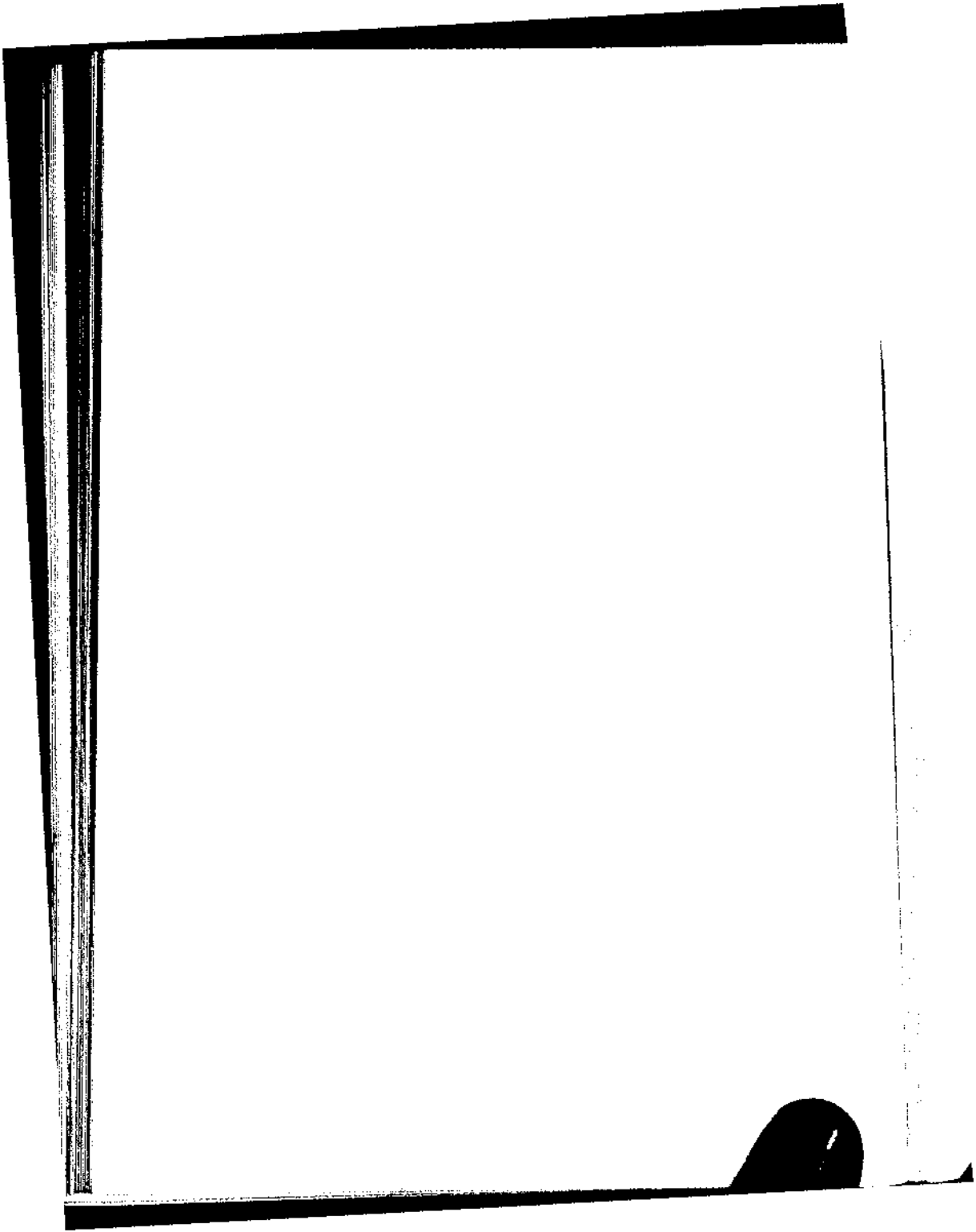
<sup>86</sup>Ouvres I, Cinquieme Entretien, p. 413.

<sup>87</sup>Ouvres I, Cinquieme Entretien, p. 417.

the Vatican Council. This Council defined the fact that the Church through certain miraculous perfections was the great and perpetual motive of credibility and an irrefutable argument of its divine origin.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup>C. Vaticanum, Sess. 3, cap. 3. [D. B. 1794].



## CONCLUSION.

The Catholic Church is holy because the Spirit of God dwells in this divinely instituted society. The Catholic Church is visibly holy because this sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit present in the Church is evidenced in naturally observable facts, namely in the efficacious means of sanctification and in the Christ-like members who are knit into the social unity of the Church by the internal bond of grace and the external bonds of public profession of divine faith, public reception of the holy sacraments and by public obedience to the vicarious rule of Christ.

The testimony of Christian tradition to the reality of this visible holiness of the Catholic Church never falters throughout the long centuries of its history. The great Saint Clement of Rome was just as clear and quite as emphatic in his affirmation of this fact concerning the Church as was the Council of the Vatican. The Christian life is the life of union with God in filial love. This life is made possible for man through the gift of God's grace and is effected in man by means of the revealed truths and the divinely empowered sacraments and is brought to the bloom of its perfection under the watchful care of the delegated ministers of God. The emphasis of Christian thought is centered primarily, though not exclusively, on the holiness of the Doctrine which the Church imparts to all men in the exercise of its mission of instructing all men to know, to love and to serve God. The moral life of the Christian believer corresponds to this holy doctrine and is evidenced in the just actions of the Catholic Communities.

If the fact of this visible sanctity of the Church is so clearly and so uniformly affirmed, the superhuman character of this holiness is not passed over in silence. The two out-

standing arguments of this tradition for the miraculous nature of this eminent visible holiness of the Church are, first, the sublimity and purity of this sanctity, whether of doctrine, sacraments, rule or members; second, the unquestionable fact that no other religious society has this moral and social perfection which is such a perfect expression of God's efficacious love for man and of man's obedient love for God.

The unanimous consensus of this Tradition is, therefore in positive support of the factual visible holiness of the Catholic Church as an exclusive social miracle effected by the power of God in this one Church of his institution.

The end which Christ himself determined for his Church is the spiritual transformation of all men from the status of slavery in moral evil to that of freedom in the purity of the love of God. He himself inaugurated this renovating work of the moral order by his teaching of the truths of God, by baptizing with water and spirit, by guiding his followers in the way of life which he made known to them. The Church of his institution was established to continue this work of sanctification by the exercise of its divine commission to publicly teach the doctrine Christ taught, by administering the sacraments which Christ instituted and by exercising a constant and holy vigilance over those who freely follow the way of life which God has imposed on man and made known to them through his Son.

The fact that the Church is visible holy is illustrated in the constant and uniform usage by the Christian writers of comparative studies between the constant teaching and mode of life in the Catholic Church with the variable teaching and fluctuating life of the various religious sects and philosophical systems of acknowledged human origin. The testimony of both history and experience bear witness to the inefficacy of the shifting truths proposed in these sects to effect the moral transformation of the whole man, and to the fact that moral degeneration is the logical consequence

of the part-truths and errors which they inculcate. The contrary is true of the Catholic Church. These same two sources testify to the truth of the fact that the doctrine of the Church imperates the practice of virtue and repudiates all immoral practice and that the Church has actually effected a moral transformation of generations of men in all countries and of all times.

This historically and experimentally established fact of the exclusive visible holiness of the Catholic Church necessitates the invocation of a superhuman, a divine power as operative in this Church. This is the apologetical aspect of the visible sanctity of the Church as a fact which while naturally knowable in itself, is not explainable according to natural causes. This fact, therefore, is proof of the divine intervention in favor of the Catholic Church.

The conspectus of Christian Tradition, as has been outlined in the preceding chapters, clearly asserts that this visible holiness is at one and the same time visible to man according to two aspects. First, as a Note evidencing the legitimacy of the Catholic Church as the true Church of divine institution. Second, as a Motive of Credibility demonstrative of the aptitude on the part of the Christian Religion for belief on the authority of God revealing.

The first question of fact which was considered in this thesis was that of the possibility of man's identification of a particular Church as the true Church of Christ. The answer to this question was partially studied in the witness of Christian Tradition in a summary of the use of the visible sanctity of the Catholic Church as a Note of the true Church.

In the course of this dissertation, it has been pointed out that this particular problem of the identification and distinction of the true Church from false Christian sects did not present itself to any notable degree. The historicity of the origin of the Christian Church was too clearly established in the minds of both Christian and Pagans to be open



for serious questioning. Nor did the heretical sects of those earlier days assume the widespread importance which was attained in the period of the reformation.

The Christian Apology of the early centuries was directed primarily to the demonstration of the desirability and of the credibility of the truths proposed in the Church for acceptance in divine faith. There were, however, certain characteristics in this Church which both identified this Church as the legitimate Church of Christ and distinguished it from all other religious societies. Athenagoras, for instance, gave a definition of a Christian and stated the criteria according to which a man could be judged to be a Christian. Tertullian likewise pointed out certain indices whereby the true Christian Church could be known as such.

The fourth century saw particular schismatic sects assuming a certain air of respectability in limited areas. The influence of this threat to the Christian Church is reflected in the apologies of this period. Epiphanius responded with the clear statement of fact that these sects were not Christian in origin nor parts of the Church of Christ because they lacked the holiness which was essential to the true Church of divine institution. The true Church of Christ, according to Epiphanius, was easily identified by the mark of visible sanctity. Saint Augustine likewise insisted on this particular point in his controversies with the Donatists and Manichaens. His teaching in this matter assumes importance when it is recalled that the formulators of the Note-theory appealed to the authority of Augustine as a support for the validity of their apology.

It was not, however, until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that the question of the Note of the true Church assumed its true apologetical importance. By this date not only was the universal recognition of the Catholic Church as the Church of divine origin widely questioned but also a false opinion of the true Church as an invisible society to which all sects could belong so long as they preserved the

spirit of the Gospels. The response of the Catholic Apologists was, as has been pointed out, the formulation of the theory of the Notes of the true Church. The one true Church of divine institution was a visible society which was so marked by God that it was easily identifiable by certain naturally knowable facts. These authors appealed to the historical witness of the early Apologists and Fathers of the Church as well as to an experimental knowledge based on a comparative study of existing religious societies in their determination of these proper and early known signs of the genuine Church of Christ. It is to the authors of this period that we are indebted for the theoretical formulization in the scholastic terminology of the theory of the Notes. Their facts and arguments, however, were those drawn from the historical tradition of the Church.

The Council of the Vatican in the year of eighteen hundred and seventy officially expressed this common and constant teaching of this tradition in the definitive statement of fact that God has marked the Church of his institution with certain proper and easily known characters by means of which the Church was visible to all men as the guardian and teacher of his revelation.

The second question of fact which was studied in this apologetical tradition of the Church is the demonstrative value of the motive of visible sanctity in the judgment of credibility.

The problem presented by this question of fact has explicitly engaged the attention of apologists of every age throughout the history of the Church. The demonstration of the divine origin of the Christian Religion is traditionally recognized as the establishment of the credibility of the Christian faith. The positive objective of every Christian apologist has been to establish this fact of the revelation of the Christian Religion. The traditional argument as presented in the historical records of the Apologists, Fathers, Theologians and Controversialists is based on the unquestion-

able superhuman facts, which that as effects of God's intervening power witness to the divine origin of this religion, and, therefore, to its credibility. This tradition recognizes as demonstrative arguments not only miracles and prophecies but also the divine facts visible in the Church. In the earlier ages of this tradition, the distinction between appetibility and credibility was not too clearly drawn. The close of the second century, however, saw a clear grasp of the idea of credibility on the part of the apologists of the Church.

The historical presentation of the miraculous fact of the visible sanctity of the Church as a fact, naturally and easily knowable as an effect in excess of the natural powers of creatures, which demonstrated the divine origin of the Christian Religion has been outlined in the course of this thesis. It is well to note, however, that this visible sanctity in itself does not constitute the motive which Christian Tradition advanced in proof of the fact of the divine origin of the Christian faith. The great motive of credibility in the minds of all the great apologists is the Church itself as manifested to all men as essentially holy in a visible and eminent way, as working miracles, as fulfilling prophecies. But one aspect of this motive has been considered in this dissertation, namely that visible holiness which is essential to the Church as a society and manifested in its doctrine, its sacraments, its rule and its members.

The mode of presentation has varied slightly according to the modification imposed by immediate circumstances. The first six centuries of the Christian era bears witness to the popular presentation of this argument. The emphasis in this mode was placed on the more evident of the holy facts in the Church, namely, on the holiness of doctrine and that of the members of the Church.

The succeeding eight centuries saw this problem of credibility treated in its relation to the act of divine faith from the theological point of view. The identical motives and arguments were employed but the directive influence

was theological in character rather than apologetical. It is well to note, however, that this period laid the groundwork for the classical apologetical method which flourished in the years of the reformation.

This classical method of apologetics came into prominence in the sixteenth century. These apologists employed all the technique of the Schoolmen in the presentation of the traditional question and solution. Exactness of definition, finesse of distinction, coordination and subordination of fact, argument and conclusion were the principal contributions of this group. Their emphasis was placed on the miracles and prophecies in the Church.

The popular method of the earlier tradition, however, was not neglected during this period. Great preachers and churchmen such as Bossuet, Lacordaire and Cardinal De-champs gave continued expression to the apology of the people. The Church itself as visible holy in its doctrine, cult and rule and members was the burden of their proof of the divine origin of the Christian Religion and the demonstration of the credibility of the Christian truths. It is interesting to observe the great emphasis which these apologists placed on the holiness of life evidenced in the ordinary lives of the common Christian people.

The Council of the Vatican officially recognized the validity of this demonstration of the credibility of the Christian Faith. The Council explicitly stated that the credibility of the Christian Religion could be determined by all men not only by reason of the miracles and prophecies but also from the Church itself as manifested in its miraculous visible sanctity.

It is evident from the analysis of the Christian Tradition in respect to the value of the motive of the visible sanctity of the Church in the judgment of credibility, that this statement of fact by the Vatican Council affords a most exact summary of the traditional Christian teaching. On

the other hand, the significance of this statement of the Vatican Council is best understood and appreciated in the traditional backgrounds upon which it is based and from which it is drawn.

This study of the traditional backgrounds of the decisions of the Council of the Vatican has had as its objective the verification of but one of those notes which this Council states identify the Catholic Church as the genuine Church of Christ and of but one of those motives which establish the credibility of the Christian message. The Church as manifested to all men as visible holy can be known by all men as that Church of Christ which they can embrace in divine faith and through which they can attain sanctification and salvation.

The traditional spirit of this true Church of Christ which is worthy of the belief of all men is beautifully expressed in a Christian's prayer that is to be found in the *Didache*. "Be not unmindful, O Lord, of your holy Church, free her from all that is evil, perfect her in your love and father her from the four ends of the earth into your most holy Kingdom which you have prepared for her."<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup>*Didache*, cap. 10, n. 5.

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