

Likewise, a Catholic Legion of Temperance would have its total abstinence, its partial abstinence, its temperance for all. It would be a distinctive and Catholic salient in the war on intemperance,

Daniel M. O'Connell, S.J.

University of Detroit.

The Little Ones of Christ

Never infer that Our Lord considered that He was speaking only to ignorant or credulous minds. As Wisdom Eternal, He was competent to confound all wisdoms. Furthermore, do not believe that He was pleased that some received Him while others rejected Him. As the Saviour of men, He certainly wished that all would accept Him. This was His idea. Humble hearts heard Him in a docile manner. The proud reviled Him. Having seen this, He adored the eternal decess that permitted this attitude, and which, I insist, only permitted it. Ought then God have abandoned doing anything in this world unless men could understand why and how He was doing it? Ought God have refused to manifest His inward life, if creatures could not grasp why the activity of the Infinite Being is what it is? If that were so, then He ought not to have revealed the Trinity to us and He should not have brought about the Incarnation of the Word. If He wished to do these things, He had to accept the fact that He would not even be listened to by those who pretend to admit nothing that their own reason cannot account for. Is it hard for you to see which of these two alternatives the Infinite Goodness should accept?

—Pinard de la Boullaye, in *Jésus, Fils de Dieu* (Paris: Édifions Spes, 1932), p. 33.

The True Church

The Catholic Church alone retains the true worship. This is the fount of truth. This is the home of the faith. This is God's temple. If a man does not enter it, or if he leaves it, he is separated from the hope of life and from eternal salvation.

—Lactantius, in his *Divinae institutiones*, Book IV, cap. 30.

THE NOTE OF CATHOLICITY IN SCHOLASTIC THEOLOGY

As it is presented and explained in the science of sacred theology, the Church's characteristic of catholicity has a definite and highly important pedagogical value. The teacher of God's revealed truth can point to the real and manifest universality of the Catholic Church as the evident accomplishment of the divine promises to and the divine prophecies about the final and definitive status of God's kingdom on earth. Furthermore, precisely by reason of its visible catholic unity, the Church of God in this world stands as a true and obvious miracle of the social order, as an effect which God has produced in the world to be an authentic divine signature, attesting the genuineness of that teaching proposed by the Church as having been revealed by God. The traditional theology of the Catholic schools shows us the way to formulate both of these proofs effectively, in defending the Church and its doctrine against attackers, in instructing candidates for admission into the true kingdom of God on earth, and in teaching Our Lord's disciples within His society.

Unfortunately, however, the most pretentious and the most erudite among the modern treatises on the catholicity of the Church, the chapter "La catholicité" in the dissertation *Les notes de l'église dans l'apologétique catholique depuis la Réforme*, by Dr. Gustave Thils, seems to take it for granted that the note of catholicity, as presented by the theologians for the past few centuries, has been tried and found wanting.¹ Dr. Thils divides his chapter into three "articles." The first deals with the period from 1529 until 1613, and includes studies of ecclesiologists from Nicholas Herborn to Francis Suarez. According to Dr. Thils, the writers of this period concentrated on what he calls "quantitative catholicity." This "quantitative catholicity" took in the spread of the Church throughout the world, the tremendous number of the faithful, a temporal catholicity, and, at the end of the period at least, a sketchy concept of a catholicity of doctrine. The second article of the chapter treats of the period between 1617 and 1706, from the writings of Suarez to those of

¹ *La noies de l'église dans l'apologétique catholique depuis la Réforme* (Gemb-ioux, Belgium: J. Duculot, Éditeur, 1937), pp. 212-54.

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Pierre Nicole. During these years the universality of place, as distinct from the other factors in the Church's catholicity, is supposed to have assumed ever-growing proportions. The third and final article deals with the theological teaching on the Church's catholicity from the time of Honoratus Tournely until our own day. During this period the notion of "qualitative catholicity" is said to have made its appearance in Catholic letters. This "qualitative catholicity" was presented as a note of the Church, according to Dr. Thils, because the progressive impoverishment of the notion of "quantitative catholicity" had rendered this latter concept unfit to demonstrate the position of the Church as the true society of Christ. The impoverishment, it seems, is supposed to consist in the tendency of theologians to explain the catholicity of the Church in terms of its extension throughout the world and of the multitude of its members, rather than in terms of the completeness of its doctrine or of its antiquity. Dr. Thils seems to believe that these two factors must enter into any adequate concept of the Church's catholicity?

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Actually, of course, this contention is completely unfounded. The Catholic Church holds and teaches the entire content of divine public revelation, while various other religious organizations profess belief in individual statements that form a part of this revealed message. Moreover, the Catholic Church is really and manifestly the same society which Christ Our Lord founded by organizing His disciples around Himself during the days of His public life on earth. It is, furthermore, the kingdom of God on earth, and thus a supernatural company which has existed since the first days of the human race. Nevertheless, neither the integrity of its faith and its teaching nor its own antiquity have ever been the exact and formal reason why this society has been properly designated as the Catholic Church. An argument for the Catholic Church is one thing; an argument specifically from the catholicity of this Church is quite another. The teachings about the integrity and the doctrinal infallibility of the Church and about its antiquity are truths about the Catholic Church. Properly speaking, they are not explanations of its catholicity.

As a matter of fact, there has been remarkably little development of the teaching about the catholicity of the true Church of

¹ Cf. op. cit., p. 214.

Jesus Christ during the scholastic period. - Thus the learned Jesuit theologian Joseph De Guibert gives, in his *De Christi ecclesia*, what is certainly as complete an explanation of the Church's catholicity as can be found in all of the literature of scholastic theology. Nevertheless, there is scarcely an element in his explanation which cannot be found already evolved in the writings of St. Augustine. The chief contribution of the scholastic writers in this field has been the formation of a technical lexicon to designate the various aspects of catholicity, aspects which the older authors considered and explained, however, with remarkable thoroughness and exactness. We must remember also that there is by no means a complete agreement among the modern theologians upon the lexicon of catholicity.

Fr. De Guibert distinguishes between catholicity considered materially and catholicity considered in its formal aspect. The former is found in the unorganized group of men existent throughout the world. The latter is recognizable in a truly formed society existent in every part of the world. Furthermore, the formally catholic society has the catholicity of aptitude if it is competent to exist *among all the* nations of the earth. It possesses the catholicity of right when it has the moral power to be diffused in this way. It has the catholicity of fact when it is actually so diffused throughout the world.³ Zapelena speaks of this *catholicitas iuris* as what some call qualitative catholicity.⁴

This *de facto* catholicity is said to be physical when the society exists among literally all the peoples of the earth. It is a moral catholicity when the society is not in existence among numerically all of the peoples of the earth, but when it exists among enough of them so that it can be said correctly to be everywhere on earth. Men are perfectly justified in saying that a society exists among all the nations of the earth, even though they have not ransacked the latest treatises to see exactly how many *nationes* can actually be found in the world, and even though there may be a few peoples among whom this society has not yet been established.

De Guibert defines absolute catholicity or universality as one recognizable as such even apart from any comparison with a less extensive society. Relative catholicity, on the other hand, is the

*Cf. *De Christi ecclesia* (Rome: The Gregorian University, 1928), p. 93.

*Cf. *De ecclesia Christi* (Rome: The Gregorian University, 1946), I, 398.

universality of a society which can be called world-wide only in comparison with some more restricted organization. A society is said to have simultaneous catholicity when it exists among all nations at the same time. Successive catholicity, on the other hand, is found where a society has at one time or another in the course of its history existed in all or in most of the nations of the world, even though it has not had world-wide diffusion at any one time.

Catholicity, according to Fr. De Guibert, can be considered according to a twofold element, positive and negative. The negative element in catholicity is that which excludes all merely national or particular characteristics from the society, so that it is not restricted to any one race or nation or economic class. The positive element is "the wide actual diffusion throughout the world, together with a great and conspicuous multitude of members" of this society. As a matter of fact, then, the negative element is nothing more or less than what the author has already defined as the catholicity of aptitude, while the positive element is the note of catholicity itself.⁵

Fr. De Guibert discusses this terminology only in order that he may bring out the traditional teaching of Catholic theology on this note of the true Church of Jesus Christ. He teaches that formal and actual catholicity is a constant property of the Church of Jesus Christ by the will of the divine Founder of that Church. He holds correctly that the catholicity of the true Church is a teaching of divine faith, and that it is perfectly certain that actual and perpetual universality is a property of the true *ecclesia*. He holds that the simultaneous, rather than the successive, catholicity of the true Church is the common teaching of theologians today, and that relative, rather than absolute, moral catholicity is more probably the real note of the kingdom of God in this world. It is interesting to note that Fr. Yves de la Brière uses the term "relative catholicity" to express the same meaning that De Guibert brings out in the expression "moral catholicity," and uses "physical catholicity" to designate what De Guibert and most other theologians mean by "absolute" universality.®

It seems, to this writer at least, that the very complexity of De Guibert's lexicon militates against the acceptability of his own

*Cf. *op.cit.*, p.94.

•Cf. *Dictionnaire apologétique de la foi catholique*, I, 1286. .

thesis. The fact of the matter is that he, like all the other traditional theologians of the Catholic Church, is trying to bring out the fact that the true *ecclesia* of Jesus Christ Our Lord, according to the promises made by Our Lord and according to the prophecies made and recounted in the Old Testament about His society, an organization which is spread abroad over the entire world to live among all nations. Neither the Old Testament prophecies about the kingdom of God or the seed of Abraham nor the New Testament descriptions of the society of Our Lord's disciples seem to stand out in sufficient clarity in an explanation of the note of catholicity constructed principally along the lines of this technical Latin terminology.

God's kingdom on earth in the days of its final and Christian covenant is described in Scripture as an organization which is at the same time existent among all nations and subject to persecution from the outside. Ever since the days of St. Optatus and St. Augustine, theologians have pointed to the fact that the visible Catholic Church manifests these very characteristics. St. Optatus listed the most important places where the true Church of Christ was established in his own time. He limited himself quite remarkably to provinces and regions of the Roman empire, listing Africa, Spain, Gaul, Italy, Pannonia, Dacia, Moesia, Thracia, Achaia, Macedonia, all Greece, Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Pamphylia, Phrygia, Cilicia, the three Syrias, the two Armenias, Egypt, and Macedonia.⁷ Yet, with this listing, the African Father taught that the true Church was termed Catholic "because it is *rationabilis et ubique diffusa*."^{*} The basic argument in St. Augustine's works against the Donatists is the contention that the Church is recognizable as the promised kingdom of God in the new dispensation, even though there were as yet a great many nations which had not received the apostolic preaching. He insisted upon the actual prophecies about the *ecclesia* and the actual promises made to this society and set down in Sacred Scripture. His readers and hearers were given the opportunity to see that the society which called itself, and which was universally designated as, the Catholic Church really corresponded

⁷Cf. *Contra Parmenianum Donatistam*, Lib. II, cap. I, *CSEL*, XXVI, 32f.

^{*}CL *op. tit.*, Lib. II, cap. 1, *CSEL*, XXVI, 33.

to the picture of Abraham's seed drawn in the inspired writings.' The questionings about the actual significance of the various terms employed in modern theology have done little to recapture the effectiveness of this procedure of St. Augustine, a procedure which is as effective in our day as it was in his. In any event, the technical terminology employed by De Guibert and the other modern scholastic theologians is intended only to bring out the very truth about the Church of God which St. Augustine expressed in his writings and sermons.

The technical terminology of modern scholastic ecclesiology in the matter of catholicity has, like the teaching of St. Augustine himself, tended to bring out the existence of God's kingdom on earth among all nations, as the divine promises and prophecies had signified. The theologians of our own day, however, like their predecessors, have taken cognizance of other meanings which have been attached to the catholicity of Our Lord's true Church. Thus, among recent writers, Fr. Reginald Schultes lists seven different reasons on account of which the true Church can be designated as catholic. It is catholic by reason of place, because it is spread abroad over the entire world. It is catholic in time because it will never fail. It is catholic because it is made up of members from every tribe, and nation, and tongue. Again, it is called catholic because it excludes no class of persons from its membership. The fifth of these reasons or aspects that establish the Church as catholic is the fact that it possesses the entire doctrine of Christ without error. The Church is also said to be catholic because of the universality of its means of salvation, since it contains remedies against all the spiritual evils of all men, and because all of Our Lord's passion is effective within it. The seventh and final aspect of the Church's catholicity is that of its obligation and necessity, in virtue of which the Church is said to be the way of salvation necessary for all men.¹⁰

Schultes draws his list from the fifteenth-century Dominican theologian, the Cardinal John de Turrecremata.¹¹ Fr. Timothy

* Cf. the article "St. Augustine's Use of the Note of Catholicity" in last month's issue of *The American Ecclesiastical Review*.

¹⁰ Cf. *De ecclesia catholica* (Paris: Lethielleux, 1931), p. 179.

¹¹ Turrecremata, in his *Summa de ecclesia* (Venice: 1560), Lib. I, cap. 13 gives four reasons to explain the designation of the orthodox faith as "catholic," and also brings out the reason why the Christian should properly be

Zapelena speaks of six different ways of designating the Church as catholic or universal,¹² and his enumeration bears a strong resemblance to that set down in the *De regimine christiano* of the fourteenth-century Augustinian bishop, James of Viterbo.¹³ Hurter divides the content of catholicity under five headings,¹⁴ of which Lepicier, Van Noort, and Lercher use only four.¹⁵ Yet, in the final analysis, all of these theologians fall back directly or indirectly upon the teaching contained in a passage from the work *De ecclesiasticis officiis* by St. Isidore of Seville.

The *Catholica* is so-called because it is established throughout the entire world, or because there exists within it the catholic, that is to say, the general doctrine to instruct men about things visible and invisible, about things of heaven and things of earth, or because it draws every class of men to itself unto the subjection of piety, drawing rulers and those who are ruled, the learned and the simple, or because it cures the sins of all men, whether committed by the body or by the soul.¹⁶

Schultes believes that when catholicity is considered as an intrinsic property of the Church, all the seven aspects of its universality which he has enumerated enter into it.¹⁷ In other words, the catholicity of the Church is looked upon as a thing, a kind of receptacle, within which the most diverse sorts of characteristics are contained. This manner of teaching about the Church's universality is by no means confined to Fr. Schultes. It has, however, very serious shortcomings which seem to render it an ineffective way of presenting the truths of sacred theology.

From the points of view of scholarship and of clarity, it would seem that, when we speak or write about the catholicity or the

called a Catholic. His teaching on the various ways in which the Church itself is truly Catholic are to be found on p. 17r.

¹² Zapelena, *op. cit.*, I, 397.

¹³ Cf. Part I, chapter 4, of the *De regimine christiano* in Arquillière's *Le plus ancien traité de l'église* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1926), pp. 122 ff.

¹⁴ Cf. *Theologiae dogmaticae compendium* (Innsbruck, 1878), I, 253.

¹⁵ Cf. Lepicier, *Tractatus de ecclesia Christi* (Rome, 1935), p. 157; Van Noort, *Tractatus de ecclesia Christi* (Hilversum, Holland, 1932), p. 125; Lercher, *Institutiones theologiae dogmaticae* (Innsbruck, 1934), I, 451.

¹⁶ Lib. I, cap. 1, *MPL*, LXXXIII, 740.

¹⁷ Cf. *op. cit.*, p. 179.

universality of the Church, we ought to focus our attention on that property by virtue of which this society has been called and is called catholic or universal. As far as the evidence at our disposition is concerned, the orthodox and true Church of Jesus Christ has actually been called the Catholic Church since its earliest days precisely because and only because it has been, in contrast to the various conventicles which have falsely claimed the Christian name, the brotherhood of world-wide or universal fellowship. The so-called "catholicity of doctrine" and the "catholicity of means of salvation" are truths about the true Church of Jesus Christ which should be explained on their own accord and in their own right.

There may have been a good reason in ancient times for crowding these various and distinct characteristics of the true Church together under the general heading of catholicity. The common grouping may have been an effective aid to the memories of students in days long gone by. It is, however, a serious disadvantage to modern teaching about the true Church. The present day student of the true faith is served considerably better when he is told how the name of "Catholic" actually came to be applied to the Church, rather than when he is reminded of the various ways in which the name "universal" might properly be applied to the company of Christ. For all practical purposes, of course, that is the attitude the traditional theologians have adopted. As a group, they have excluded the "catholicity of doctrine" and the "catholicity of the means of salvation" from consideration when they deal directly with the *note* of catholicity itself.

It is well to remember also that crowding these other characteristics along with the genuine catholicity of the Church under the heading of "universality" has produced certain other difficulties in the teaching of sacred theology. When, speaking along the line suggested by the ordinary explanation of the "catholicity of doctrine," we say that the Church has the entirety of the divine public revelation and that the non-Catholic religious conventicles contain and propose some percentage of this divine truth, we are leaving the way open to a serious misinterpretation of the matter. Actually it is quite misleading to compare the teaching of a non-Catholic religious community to that of the Catholic Church by saying that the sects propose some percentage of that doctrine

which is taught in its entirety by the Church. Actually, of course, the teaching of any individual sect, like the teaching of the Church itself, must stand or fall as a unit. The teaching of any sect is proposed for belief on the authority of divine faith, and this message, as a unit, is a fabrication. The fact that it has been altered only in a comparatively few particulars does not prevent it from being classified, as a unit, as a counterfeit divine message.

Thus, speaking formally, acceptance of the teaching of any sect with the idea that it is a communication from God does not objectively and directly pertain to the virtue of divine faith, which, according to the Vatican Council, is "the supernatural virtue by which, with the grace of God inspiring and assisting us, we believe those things which He has revealed to be true, not because of the intrinsic truth of these things manifested to the natural light of reason, but because of the authority of God Himself who has revealed them, who can neither be deceived nor Himself deceive."¹⁸ Taken as a unit, a non-Catholic creed has not been revealed by God. Hence it cannot be accepted rightly and objectively on divine faith as a message or communication from Him. It is spurious as a whole, and the fact that it may contain certain sentences borrowed from the true Catholic creed does not change its intrinsic character.

We should, however, distinguish very sedulously between that somewhat questionable teaching which holds that the Church itself is designated as Catholic because it contains the totality of divine faith and the other very valuable doctrine which explains the catholicity of the faith itself. St. Vincent of Lerins has expounded the reason why the true faith itself is called "catholic" in his *Commonitorium*.

Within *the* Catholic Church we must take pains to hold that which has been believed everywhere, always and by all men; for that is truly catholic, as the very force and nature of the term declare, which takes in all things in almost a universal manner. We shall do this if we follow universality, antiquity, and agreement.¹⁹

Furthermore, the so-called "catholicity of means of salvation" is inclined to be confusing. There is sometimes a tendency to interpret this formula by saying that the Catholic Church has

¹⁸Sessio III, cap. 3, *DB*, 1759.

¹⁹Cap. 2, *MPL*. L, 639.

more means of salvation than other religious bodies, and at least implying that these non-Catholic communions have true means of salvation to a certain extent independent of the Catholic Church. The acceptance of this viewpoint involves a complete misunderstanding of the nature of the *ecdesia* itself.

The true Church of Jesus Christ is essentially the family of the Redeemer, the Body of Christ which is itself the unique vehicle of salvation. It is the company into which men must enter to escape from the family of the old Adam, turned away from God by the process of original sin. The family of the old Adam is the "perverse generation" which men can leave only by entering the kingdom of God which is the true *ecdesia* of Jesus Christ Our Lord.

Those who speak so glibly of means of salvation outside the Church seem to forget the basic teaching of St. Augustine on this portion of the divine doctrine. "Whatever," he tells us, "men hold outside of the Church of the things that belong to the Church, is of no value unto salvation." The true Church is the company of God. It is the fellowship within which alone Our Lord dwells. It is the one agency through which Our Lord does the will of His Father on earth. The religious societies outside of it belong in one way or another to the host which is in some way subject to the "prince of this world," the enemy of Christ.

The truth we have just enuntiated is a perfectly certain part of the divine revelation. Strangely enough, the heresy of the first Reformers did not involve any rejection of this fact. They were just as insistent upon it as were the champions of the Catholic truth themselves. The one point at issue between the Catholic teachers and their heretical adversaries was brought out in the Augustinian statement set down by the brilliant John Driedo, the Louvain theologian. "This," he said, "is the controversy between us. Where is the Church of Christ? Is it in your company or in ours?" The heretical claim, consistent though incorrect, was that the unorganized mass of the just or of tire predestined constituted the *vera ecdesia Christi*. The Catholic truth, so ably propounded and defended by Driedo and his associates, was that the visible Catholic Church, with its good members and its bad members, actually constitutes this *ecdesia*. This truth is the final aspect of the great mystery of God's dispensation for men. Because this visible and truly organized society actually is the

ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ in this world, the means of salvation belong to it and have no utility to salvation away from it.

Thus it should be perfectly clear that there is no proper analogy between the relative positions of true Church and the various heretical conventicles on the question of Christian truth or on the matter of the means of salvation and their mutual relations with regard to geographical extension. The various sects, heretical or schismatic, have real extension, even though it is in no case world-wide, as is the case with the true *ecclesia Christi*. They have not, however, even a partial real possession of Christian truth or of the Christian means of salvation. Consequently, even from this aspect, the inclusion of these factors among the elements of the Church's catholicity can be quite misleading for the student of sacred theology.

The inclusion of these truths, however, as elements in the catholicity of the Church, has still another and a more important disadvantage. The sevenfold "catholicity" of Turrecremata and Schultes and the sixfold "catholicity" of Zapelena can only serve to distract and confuse the consideration of the true note of catholicity, so ably presented in Catholic theology since the days of St. Augustine. For all practical purposes, the traditional theologians have almost always limited themselves to the existence of the Church throughout the world, and among all the peoples of the world, when they have come to explain that the visible Church of which the Roman Pontiff is the visible leader as Christ's vicar on earth is actually the *ecclesia promissionum*. They have been able to show that this visible Church manifestly corresponds to the description of God's kingdom on earth set down in the promises and the prophecies of Holy Scripture, and that the fact of this correspondence is the very element which has earned for the true Church its title as the *Catholica*. Their explanation is only muddled by the inclusion of absolutely foreign elements in this catholicity'.

It is also interesting to note that even with reference to the function of catholicity in manifesting the Church as a miracle of the social order there has been very little theological advance in scholastic history'. The Vatican Council declared that the Church is, among other reasons, "because of its catholic unity," manifest as "a great and perpetual motive of credibility and as an unwavering witness of its own character as the bearer of a divine

message.”²⁰ The letter to Diognetus, one of the earliest apologies of Christianity in all Catholic literature, brings out this same truth very clearly. The section of the pertinent passage which has survived (the teaching in question is found after one of the principal *lacunae* in the text), claims that it is a miracle or a manifestation of the power of God that the Church has gained a tremendous number of members not only in spite of, but actually through the persecution by its enemies. “They [the Christians] are thrown to wild beasts,” the letter informs the mysterious Diognetus, “to make them deny the Lord. They are not conquered. Do you not realize that, the more of them there are persecuted, the more the rest multiply? These things seem not to be the works of man, but the power (*δύναμις*) of God. These are the signs of His parousia.”²¹

In the light of the traditional teaching on the Church’s catholicity, and especially on the use of this characteristic as a note or mark of God’s kingdom on earth, the modern tendency to reject the old notion and to replace it with a concept of “qualitative” catholicity appears unfortunate in the extreme. The vaguely defined “qualitative” catholicity can consistently be identified only with what the traditional theologians have termed the catholicity of right or of aptitude. When we say that the true Church has the catholicity of right or of aptitude, we mean only that it is commissioned by God Himself to exist throughout the world, and that, by its very nature, it is competent to spread itself abroad in this way. Strictly speaking, the catholicity of right could not possibly be a note of the Church at all. The notes of the Church, as a group, are those characteristics which serve to designate one particular society as God’s kingdom on earth, and hence precisely as the society which has the commission from God to establish itself throughout the nations and the peoples of the world. In other words, the concept of the *catholicitas iuris* belongs in the conclusion of that proof that is meant to be built up out of the notes of the Church.

The catholicity of aptitude, on the other hand, is an active potency or competence within a society. Like any other potency, it is observable ultimately in terms of its act. The Church is

²⁰ Sessio III, cap. 3, *DB*, 1794.

²¹ Cap. 7, Funk, *Patres apostolici* (Tubingen, 1901), I, 404.

shown to have the catholicity of aptitude by the fact that it possesses what these modern writers call quantitative catholicity. It is manifest as the kind of society which is fitted to live among all nations by the fact that it actually does live among them.

Basically, we appeal to the catholicity of the true Church of Jesus Christ as a note of the Church in order to show those persons who accept or who profess to accept the promises and the prophecies about God's kingdom contained in Holy Scripture that the living religious society subject to the Bishop of Rome manifests in itself the realization of these promises and prophecies. The descriptions of God's kingdom in Holy Scripture pictures it as a society actually preaching the Gospel of Christ to every creature and teaching all nations. The Church began that missionary activity on the first Christian Pentecost. It will continue that missionary activity until the end of the world. When its missionary career has been finished, the end will come. Or, to put the same truth in another way, the Church is, by its very nature, an institution which must always strive to bring the message and the grace of God to those outside its own ranks. The only force which will be competent to stop this activity will be the end of the world itself. And, in order to teach all nations, it must exist throughout the world. The quality which makes it visible as the Church of the promises is its actual extension, not its aptitude or its commission.

Much of the dissatisfaction which writers like Thils have expressed on the subject of the Church's quantitative catholicity seems to come from a misunderstanding of the function of a note of the Church as such. These writers seem to expect that a note of the Church ought to be the foundation of an argument which would convince any non-Catholic, willingly or unwillingly, that the Catholic Church is the true Church. Actually, of course, the note of the Church is not intended to produce any such magically effective proof. It contains valid evidence, but evidence that is meaningful only to the person who knows the basic teaching about the kingdom of God in the dispensation of the New Testament. Furthermore, it is not the sort of evidence which, like that of mathematics, compels the attention of the person to whom it is addressed. The evidence in mathematics, or at least in the ampler forms of mathematics, is such that no sane man can deny it. The truth of the notes of the Church, on the other hand, is

such that men who are unwilling to believe in Christ or to accept His Church can always find some sort of excuse for their attitude.

St. Robert Bellarmine has taught this particular truth about the notes of the Church very accurately in his *Controversies*.

Therefore we say that the notes of the Church that we bring forward do not produce absolutely the evidence of truth, since otherwise it would not be an article of faith that this Church is the true Church, nor would there be found anyone to deny this, just as no one is found to deny the statements which mathematicians demonstrate. Still, however, they produce the evidence of credibility, according to the words of the Psalm, 92: "Thy testimonies are become exceedingly credible." But for those who admit the divine Scriptures, and the histories and the writings of the ancient Fathers, they [the notes of the Church] also produce the evidence of truth.²²

Actually, we would be greatly mistaken about the teaching on the Church's catholicity were we to imagine that it belongs only in the field of controversy or in the instructions to be given to catechumens. The note of catholicity, like all of the other notes of the true Church of Jesus Christ, is one of the visible properties which manifest this society as the fulfillment of the divinely inspired proclamations about God's kingdom on earth. Through the use of the note of catholicity, it is possible to help our own people to understand more clearly the basic notion of the Church itself as God's kingdom on earth and as the Body of Christ. This non-polemical use of the note of catholicity is of itself more important and more general than its controversial function. It is of particular value and interest in our own time when the forces of the world seem combined to prevent Catholics from realizing the nature and the dignity of their own communion as the one supernatural kingdom of God on earth.

The kingdom of God for which we are commanded to pray by Our Lord Himself is the Catholic Church. The earlier Christians considered it in their Eucharistic prayer precisely in terms of its catholic character. Long ago the author of the *Didache* wrote that the Church of his time prayed in the Eucharistic sacrifice "that Thy Church may be gathered together from the ends of the earth

a Prima controversia generalis, De Conciliis, et ecclesia militante. Lib. IV, De notis ecclesiae, cap, 3, in De controversiis Christianae fidei adversus huius temporis haereticos (Cologne, 1619), II, 167.

into Thy kingdom.”²⁸ This was a petition to God that the Church triumphant might be the fruition of a Church militant which would have actually fulfilled the prophecies of the Scripture, and actually have attained to the uttermost bounds of the earth. It was, in other words, a petition to God that the essentially missionary function of the Church might be successful until the end of time. The *Sacramentary* of Sarapion, written down in the fourth century, takes up this same prayer to God, in this petition the Church begs God to “gather Thy holy Church out of every nation and every country and every city and house, and make one living Catholic Church.”²⁴

The true kingdom of God is looked upon in these, its own petitions to Our Lord, as a society always being formed and conserved in being by the Creator. The priest, and the *plebs Dei* whose petitions are expressed in the words of the priest, beg God that this kingdom may be established actually and perfectly throughout the world. This complete and physical catholicity is the end towards which the Church of God strives in the world, while it manifests in itself an actual moral and formal catholicity. That charity which is the motivating force of the Catholic Church’s activity and which is expressed in its Eucharistic sacrifice necessarily works towards the accomplishment of this end.

The disciple of Christ who truly loves God’s kingdom on earth and who is devoted to its divine teaching actually deserves the title of Catholic. Such is the truth most accurately and perfectly expressed by St. Vincent of Lerins.

Consequently, he is a true and genuine Catholic who loves God’s truth, who loves the Church, who loves the Body of Christ, and who sets nothing before the divine Religion, the Catholic faith; not the authority nor the love nor the genius nor the philosophy of any man whatsoever; but [he is the true and genuine and true Catholic who] sets all these things at nought, and makes up his mind to hold and believe only what he knows the Catholic Church to have held from ages past²⁵

²⁴ Cap. 10, Funk, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

²⁵ Cf. Kidd, *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Church*, London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1938), II, 39,

²⁶ Cap. 20. *ifPL*, L, 665.

To this end: to the formation of the true Catholic in the kingdom of God, the teaching on the Church's note of catholicity is manifestly effective.

The Catholic himself is so situated that he, better than anyone else, can appreciate and profit from the teaching about the universality of his own Church. He accepts the Scripture as the inspired word of God. Hence he is in a position to realize the full import of the scriptural teaching about the catholicity of God's kingdom on earth. He cannot fail to appreciate his Church more perfectly when he is brought to meditate upon the fact that the catholicity of that Church results from the salvific will of God Himself. The visible Church of Jesus Christ is a world-wide society precisely because it is the house of Abraham's seed, in which God wills that all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. It is Catholic because Our Lord, who died for the sins of all men, has truly commissioned it to carry His truth and His salvation to every creature. It seeks always to extend itself even more among the children of men for no other reason than because it is the company and the Body of Christ, enlightened by His teaching and motivated by His love.

There has been no more unfortunate tendency in modern theological literature than that which has resulted in the division of the *tractatus de ecclesia* into a *pars apologetica* and a *pars dogmatica*. This division has brought with it the implication that the so-called "apologetical" portion of ecclesiology was merely or at least chiefly a source of arguments that could be utilized to overthrow attacks against Our Lord's company. Actually this section, with its teaching about the foundation and the notes of the true Church, contains the basic revealed teaching about the kingdom of God in this world. The teaching on the catholicity of the Church belongs to this section. And, like the rest of the divinely revealed doctrine about Christ's kingdom, it is immensely and primarily profitable to the disciples of Christ.

Indeed, it seems impossible that there could be an adequate theology of Catholic Action without definite and profound treatment of catholicity itself.

Joseph Cufford Fenton

*The Catholic University of America,
Washington, D. C.*

Answers to Questions

DISPENSATION FROM THE EUCHARISTIC FAST

Question: Do women in a maternity ward come under the heading of "the sick" in the matter of dispensation from the eucharistic fast?

Answer: If a woman awaiting the birth of a child is in danger of death, either because of her present condition or because it is anticipated that the delivery will involve grave risk to her life, she can receive the Holy Eucharist as Viaticum, without fasting. However, in the latter case—when she is *hic et nunc* not in danger of death from an actual bodily condition, but will be in such danger in a short time, with the beginning of labor—she could not now be anointed, though she could be given the Viaticum. For there is a *probable danger of imminent death*, justifying the reception of Holy Viaticum, but since it is not yet *present in the form of an affliction of the body*, she could not validly receive Extreme Unction. Her case is similar to that of the soldier going into a dangerous combat. (Cf. Kilker, *Extreme Unction* [St. Louis: Herder, 1927], p. 173.)

However, the questioner is doubtless concerned with the case of a woman who is not in danger of death, but is in the hospital, either shortly before or shortly after the birth of a child. Can she be considered *sick*, if she is enduring only the normal pains and inconvenience of childbirth? There were some theologians who held that even when she is actually in danger of death from parturition a woman cannot be anointed, because we may not regard this condition as a *sickness*. But a sufficient number of authorities can be quoted for the opposite opinion to render it fully probable that the conditions accompanying childbirth are pathological, so that even at the time of a normal delivery the woman can be regarded as *sick* (cf. Kilker, *op cit.*, p. 175). Hence, she can take advantage of the dispensations from the eucharistic fast granted to the sick. In the first place, she could use the privilege granted by the Code (Can. 858, § 2) of receiving Holy Communion once or twice a week (with the prudent advice of a confessor) after taking medicine or liquid nourishment, if she has been confined to bed (even though able to rise for a few