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THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

Preached at St. Mary's Church, Folkestone,
Sunday, October 16th.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM BARRY, D.D.
Liverpool Catholic Times.

"Now, faith is the ground of things hoped for, the evidence of things which are not seen" (Hebrews xi, 1). Two most serious charges, my brethren, have been often urged against the Catholic Church, so as that many are led by them to distrust her doctrines, and many more to detest her practices. She is declared to be infected with superstition and furiously bigoted. Bigotry and superstition—these are the words of ill omen that greet her when she would preach to the multitude and make her message known. She is told that in all she does religion falls into vile extravagances, and in all she says there is an assumption of most unwarrantable authority. Now, this morning we considered, from our own experience, how in her sacred rites and outward form the Church never does intend aught save to bring home to us the divine Presence of Christ, Who is her treasure and possession, whence it follows that those to whom she is intimately known will speak, not of superstition but of Sacraments and will soon see Christ everywhere ministering within her sanctuary, Himself the great High Priest, the sacrifice, and the example, in Whose strength all we that are Catholics live and are borne up. To-night we will look a little into that other charge of bigotry. And we shall see that it is merely the name given by strangers to Faith as the Church teaches it and we accept it. The end is always Christ. He alone sets up the altar; He alone proclaims the creed. And what can the Church do except follow His commands to teach and sacrifice? Is she not His body, in the words of St. Paul? Behold a great Sacrament, but "I speak of Christ and His Church."

THE OFFENCE OF DOGMA.

Accordingly, I have taken my text from the Greek, in which we learn what Faith truly is, after the New Testament; and the words, as you remember, lead on to a glorious catalogue, or, as it were, a canonisation, of the men and women who have lived by that Faith and overcome the world in its name. Faith is the "ground of things hoped for"; it looks to Our Saviour, it longs for His redeeming grace and the glory that follows. But Faith is not sight, as hope is not possession, for "the things that a man hath, why should he hope for them?" And it is the "evidence of things not seen," the argument on which we act as though we did see them, the reason why we affirm them to be true, and firm, and real. When that which Faith declares is sta-

ted with precision, when those statements are connected together, and when the grounds on which we hold them are given explicitly, we talk of "dogma." That is what "dogma" means—it is the witness of Faith, not loose and vague, not devoid of outline, nor a sort of blind feeling about in the dark, but clear as regarding its terms, peremptory in its utterance, exclusive of the false doctrine opposed to it. Dogma is the Faith so expressed as in every age to be accessible to the intellect and defended by its very precision from the assaults of unbelievers, rebels, and rationalists. It is "the mind of Christ," on the lips of His Church. "My Word which I have put into thy mouth shall not depart from thee, nor thy seed, nor thy seed's seed, from henceforth and for ever," saith the Lord God Almighty. Such is the Catholic dogma, fulfilling in substance and drift the definition of Faith which our text has offered us.

DOGMA IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

But will any man dare to say: "I cannot believe the Church has a 'ground' on which to stand of this description; there is no such 'evidence' of things not seen"? Surely he has ceased to be a Christian that talks a language so violently opposed to the Scriptures themselves. I hold the original New Testament in my hand; I strike its pages open where you will, and everywhere I find dogma. It abounds in dogma; it tells us of mysteries high as Heaven, deep as the abyss. If I turn to the most human—seeming of the Gospels—let us say, to St. Mark—there, amid the lowly details of its story, do we not come upon affirmations categorical and precise, touching the Divine Person and the supernatural mission of Our Lord Jesus Christ? And what is the Gospel of St. John but a poem at once and a dogmatic treatise, all its miracles, incidents, conversations, and scenery governed by certain leading ideas to which the parts are subordinate? Wherefore, at last the Apostle bids us remark, "These things are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and believing may have life in His Name." No life without believing, and no belief unless we take the word of our teacher as what it proclaims itself to be, the Word of God issuing from inspired lips and clothed in the language of men. And thus, too, St. Paul enters into deep considerations, lays down a doctrine, will have it believed under anathema. What is all this, if it is not dogma in its most decided form? But do we dream of putting it aside as impossible? May we make our petty minds the measure of God's Revelation? Or have we any call to do more than ascertain that this is indeed an authority given by God, to which we must bring every thought into subjection? Dogma, then, and the New Tes-

tament are convertible terms: if we submit to the one we cannot proudly reject the other. We are, by Divine appointment, under "the obedience of Faith."

CHURCH AND NEW TESTAMENT ARE ONE.

But again, it is popularly said: "Of course I believe what the Bible teaches, for its writers are inspired by the Holy Ghost; and I will not believe anyone except the Bible." To which I reply: How, my good Brother, do you know its writers are inspired? Whence have you learnt it? Not always, or mostly, from the writers themselves, who do not say so. Nor yet from your own reading, research, or private judgment, which would leave you often doubtful. If you know, it is by the witness of that little company which was with Jesus and which inherited His mind and Spirit. But that company, from the second century onward, has been called the Catholic Church. A thousand times have we heard its commission announced:

"Go, teach all nations." That is the charge laid upon it. And the security for its fulfilment? "The Holy Ghost shall lead you into all truth." And the promise that it shall not fail: "Lo, I am with you always." And the obedience on our part: "Hear the Church." And the end in view: "That ye be all of one mind, all say the same thing, not carried about by every wind of doctrine." Here is the provision made by God himself whereby to keep living and inviolate "the Truth as it is in Jesus." And has it not been kept? Behold, brethren, an argument of convincing power, undeniable, and even awful in its majesty. Where dogma has prevailed, Jesus lives as the Son of God incarnate, Redeemer, King, Immanuel, the Judge to come. Where it has been cast out alas!—

THE DOGMATIC CHURCH HAS KEPT CHRIST.

When altars were broken, creeds did not fare much better. As soon as dogma fell into discredit, the New Testament suffered grievously at the hands of those who professed to appeal to it. Christ Himself withdrew into a cloud. His saving Name passed by degrees into a memory, a record of the past, a doubt and a myth. He was no longer to be the Son of God. Individuals, and they a growing crowd, questioned, denied, despaired. Look at the millions now in our immense modern cities; listen to conversation in society; glance at the books of the day; sound even the pulpits in many churches. Is not the Lord Christ become to multitudes as merely human as them selves? And how is the fine gold dimmed! I will not desecrate this holy place by quoting the names which have drawn after them a third part

of the stars in Heaven. But I do say, and you are all aware, that doubt and scepticism have fastened on the Gospels as their prey, and the rejection of dogma has brought in its train a denial of Him Who is the Author and the Object of our belief. A terrible argument! An argument, moreover, enforced and driven home by the amazing events which now pass before our eyes. While so many, by a fatal logic, turning from the Creed as the Church sets her seal upon it, lose also the heavenly treasure which it holds and protects, others there are, devout, loyal to what was left them of ancient tradition, that would fain not lose their Christ. And they—by what painful steps and slow do they not advance upon the path where light shines, the old path which their fathers forsook, and new the children do their best to recover, one by one, the articles of that rejected Creed. Mark, however, that it is not individual reasoning which they employ as an instrument, but the authority of the Catholic Church—her tradition is their guide, her presence their surety. And oh! what a proof is here of the consummate wisdom that knew how to wield definition and to hew down heresy with the sword of the spirit, and to forbid the excesses of the human mind, ranging with unhalloved curiosity beyond its bounds! This, then, is the service that so-called bigotry has done by its contentings on behalf of the Faith once delivered to the Saints. It aimed at keeping the Gospel message still in the world. And now, when these returning children would set up an altar, they term it Catholic. And when they preach Christ they borrow our language, rely upon our evidence, and are undoing the work of the "Reformation."

THE VICTORY OF FAITH DUE TO GRACE.

Let us not boast ourselves, my brethren, in this astonishing change of scene. It is not our triumph, but the victory of Faith. And Faith is God's gift freely bestowed. Who are we—a handful in a corner, a remnant, lying in the gloom which fell upon us long ago, and has not yet lifted—who are we that we should take credit for a revolution so unexpected, so widespread, so promising? It is God's grace, not our endeavour, which has brought within the sanctuary those who stood afar off, and is bringing others, and stirring into life the dead bones. His gracious Spirit it is that has come down upon the deep and is brooding there, to call up a world that was not and rejoice in its beauty as in the days of old. Faith, I say, is the mind of Christ; and charity is the life of Christ. Unless we live that life, we run a risk of losing that mind. Every falling away has had its beginning in unrighte-

ousness. Take care that we ourselves be not a "ground" of offence against the Church rather than evidence of its comeliness; that by our lives we repel not where it should be ours to attract and subdue. The Gospels, creeds, councils, definitions—what is it they intend from first to last? What but to convey the mind of Christ to those that sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to bring men into His admirable light, and persuade them that there is joy in His presence? Faith is the seed of vision, love is its charm and its reward. The "ground of things hoped for," the "evidence of things not seen," is dogma, and Catholic dogma. But all is written, defined, insisted on, that from century to century we may believe in Jesus. Who is the Christ, the Son of God, and, believing, may have life in His Name.

THE UNIVERSITY SITE.

At the last meeting of the University Council on the 9th inst., the acceptance of the local government's offer to lease in perpetuity for a nominal rent the site so hotly debated at the previous meeting was confirmed by much diminished majorities of the members present. Mr. Archibald's amendment to postpone the final acceptance until the fundamental question of the patent had been settled was lost by a bare majority of one vote, and would have carried had not two of the St. Boniface representatives been absent and had not one of the St. John's men come in after the vote had been taken.

From allusions made by several speakers it was evident that Archbishop Langevin's recent offer of some eighteen acres as a bona fide gift has given pause to many members of the Council whose vote was first cast in favor of the Driving Park site. It seemed, on second thought, to dawn upon them that the St. Boniface site was truly central, much roomier and far worthier in every way of the future development of our Manitoban university. Public opinion, as expressed in the daily papers, seems decidedly veering in this direction.

THE LIGHT IS BREAKING.

The London Literary World does not love Catholics, but it does not seem to have sworn eternal enmity to historic truth. Reviewing Father Taunton's "Black Monks," it declares that the work of Catholic historians "is more and more compelling truth-loving Englishmen to abandon as partisan misrepresentations the views of the Reformation that satisfied their grandfathers." It also admits that the grounds commonly alleged by Protestant historians for the spoliation of monasteries, namely, "the corruption of morals," were almost wholly invented by the tools of Henry VIII. The light is breaking everywhere.—Ave Maria.