

No; tongues we find in every bough that se-
leann sayings show, not alone 'how brief the
life of man runs his erring pilgrimage, but
the far higher lesson expressed so comprehen-
sively by Lopez de Vega, that 'the wisest man
goes astray when he takes a single step without
God'† and that all steps are lost which lead us
farther from that central glory where is the meet-
ing of immortal ways. Through the dense ob-
scurity of this forest, as St. Amadeo de Huttenve
says, 'we shall be led by innumerable signals to
discover the source of Divine grace the Saviour
of the nations, the star of Jacob, the pillar of
truth; for truth speaks to us in every object in
the way, and at every turn: 'Vocat per se Deus.'
says St. Gregory, 'vocat per Angelos, vocat per
Patres, vocat per Prophetas, vocat per Aposto-
los, vocat per Pastores, vocat etiam per nos, vo-
cat plerumque per miracula, vocat plerumque
per flagella, vocat aliquando per hujus mundi
prosperos, vocat aliquando per adversa.*' You
see then how wide is the range allotted in this
world for our thoughts and our observations.

But let us observe more closely the resem-
blance which exists between this leafy labyrinth
of France, with its convent in the midst, to
which all paths conduct, and the great obscure
tract of life through which the human race is
wandering; for as many several ways meet thus
in one forest, as many fresh streams run in one
self sea, as many lines close in the dial's centre,
so many a thousand actions, thoughts and wishes
end in one faith, and are all in it perfected and
crowned; yes, truly, within the labyrinth of
life there is a central point where peace divine
inhabits, all rays diverging from that body in
whose virtue lies the bearing of all that it con-
tains. Through diverse passages this bright
lamp of the world rises to mortals, 'and as the
soul,' to use Dante's words, 'through members
different yet together joined, in different powers,
resolves itself; even so the intellectual efficacy
upfolds the goodness multiplied throughout all
spiritual and material things, on its own unity
revolving still.' The Divinity has been com-
pared to a circle whose circumference is infinity,
the centre being his goodness, every thing in the
world revolving round it, and being directed to
it as the rays which issue from one point—the
Church in which the Son of God incarnate
dwells, might be expressed by this same image,
and in the words of St. Bonaventura, which
Pope Innocent III uses in this very sense,†
saying, 'the centre is everywhere, and the cir-
cumference no where—immutable itself, all
things are subjected to its purposes; most per-
fect and immense it is with all things not in-
cluded, without all things not excluded, above
all things not elated, below all things not suc-
cumbent. Being the highest unity, it is all
things in all things, though all things are many,
and it is but one, to see which thus sacramen-
tally considered with the eye of faith, is to see
all good.' In the words of a Roman author,
which can be thus transferred; 'Sacer est, eter-
nus, immensus totus in toto, immo vero ipse
totum, extra, intra, cuncta complexus in se;
omnium rerum certus, et similis incerto, for how
can man know fully any thing, qui sui nesciat,
aut mens hominis videre, quæ mundus ipse non
capit.¶'

Thus, in the spiritual geography there are co-
lumnus of Hercules, beyond which none can ever
pass; for the Church of God, as a French au-
thor observes, is for man both a centre and a hori-
zon, placed at the last term of all calculation
as eternity, at the last term of all love as life and
beauty, at the last term of all thought as unity.¶
Such is the universal throne which faith erects,
where many shapes one tribute ever bear; and
of the Church we may say, in the words of
the same Roman author, 'Purior est, profecto fu-
ror egredi ex ea, et tanquam interna ejus cuncta
plane jam sint nota, ita scrutari externa.' 'In
every order of things,' says Gerbet, 'whatever
is the centre manifests itself as such in a thou-
sand ways; every thing reveals unity, for all
belongs to it.**' So the Catholic faith can easi-
ly be traced by only following the lines which
diverge from it, thence originating as all num-
bers from unity; and even as Dante notes of the
difference between what he beheld—where
every one as more in number distant from the
first was tardier in motion; and that glowed
with flame most pure that to the sparkle of truth
was nearest, as partaking most of its reality,
and that which contrariwise takes place in the
sensible world, where divinity shows more in
each round as each is vider from the centre;†
so where we might least expect to find the at-
traction of faith, as having strayed farthest, we
may find its power at the greatest strength to
bring back wanderers the longest and least ex-
tractably lost. The city of God in this respect
resembles what the poet sings of

'Mille capax aditus et ape'as undique portas
Urbs habet; utique fretum de tota flumina terra,
Sic omnes animas locus accipit ille.'

But let us
'Mark what radiant state faith spreads
In circle round her shining throne.'

For 'what can man desire that is not found in
fullest perfection there in God? If wisdom de-
light you,' continues St. Thomas of Villanova,
'here is the wisest; if beauty, here is the most

beautiful; if power, here is the most powerful;
if glory and riches and pleasure, here are all
these united in their true excellence.' 'If
riches be loved,' says St. Augustin, 'here they
are preserved without danger, if honour be
loved, here it is gained without partnership with
the unworthy, if safety be loved, here it is pos-
sessed without risk of incurring loss; if life be
loved, here it is found where it will endure for
ever.† For as God in heaven is centre, yet ex-
tends to all, so from Catholicism radiates all
that is true and just and beautiful; while every
object that reflects perfection leads the soul back
to it as to that central point St. Hildegard be-
held, at which finite forms touch the infinite.—
Rupertus compares it to that fountain in the
midst of Paradise which irrigated the whole
earth 'Omnes aquæ potabiles atque salubres,'
scith he, 'ubiqueque fluunt, vel undecumque
apparent et de fonte Paradisi per occultos me-
tus originem trahunt, et ex ejus dulcedine hoc
habent, ut potabiles sive salubres sint.'

We shall see how truly this observation may
be applied to the Church in relation to all human
arts and actions, and therefore by what a power-
ful, though sometimes secret, attraction the pur-
suit of every laudable object, the practice of
every virtue, and even the exercise of every fac-
ulty of our nature, leads to an appreciation of
the divinity of the Catholic faith.

'The feet signify the affections,' says St.
Amadeus. We direct our steps as our will di-
rects. The old poet said, and in one sense
truly, that the word 'loving' is the beginning of
the evil:

—Alla Philomena èstin arché tou kakou.

It will be the object of this work to show, that
in another and still wider sense the same word is
the beginning of felicity. 'Si potest dicere li-
cuti, 'Fralit sua quemque voluptas, quanto for-
tius,' says St. Augustin, 'nos dicere debemus,
trahit hominem ad Christum, qui defectatur ve-
ritate, delectatur beatitudine, delectatur justitia,
delectatur sempiterna vita, quod totum Christus
est.¶' See, then, how many must be the open-
ings through which the traveller catches a glimpse
at the Catholic Church as he proceeds along
the various roads of life, since the secret and
mysterious laws of moral affinity are constantly
employed in creating them, to whichever side he
directs his steps.

But here we are met by a sad reflection at the
outset, for all follow not these straight and easy
ways. On the contrary, most studiously avoid
them, 'quasi,' to use Pliny's words, 'non ea-
dem questionibus semper in termino cogitationis oc-
cursura, desiderio finis alicujus.' 'Though it is
true also that many who refuse for a long time
to follow these converging lines, by their side
wanderings along the multiplicity of intercrosses
which are intersected by them, only learn to es-
timate the number of them more till at length,
moved by grace divine, they come to the conclu-
sion that can be expressed in words of greater
assurance than those of Plato, where he said it
is the repose of the soul and the end of the jour-
ney.¶ That many, however, do choose long to
wander vainly, and that many never find the
cue, is indeed most certain; but the thought
which leads me through this work is briefly this:
to show that on every one of the roads of life, at
every stage, in all conditions, and under all the
varieties of impression which result from the dif-
ferent pursuits and studies of men, they have the
Catholic Church, standing in view, whether near
or at a distance, right before them, at which, if
led by reason forward, they must arrive by as
necessary a law as any which exists in geometry;
but that those who choose not to recognize it
may turn and strike off from the way on which
they find themselves, hoping to lose sight of it
on some other, though they are sure to be dis-
appointed in their search for solid ground of
doubt, or involuntary ignorance, since from the
next path they take there is the same bound still
plain to human intelligence, and so on in conti-
nued circling, changing one avenue for another,
from childhood unto age, from age to death.

'There is delusion in the world, and woe, and
fear, and pain.' 'It is a wild and miserable
world,' adds the same poet, 'thorny and full of
care, which every fiend can make his prey at
will.' But into this mortal desert, where every
thing is in disorder, confusion, chaos; where
actions and principles intertwine, blend together,
become inextricable as branches and impervious
underwood in an immense primitive forest, the
men of faith have indeed entered with axe in
hand, and, following their Divine Master, have
traced there on all sides distinct and sure paths,
by which they guide us safely towards this cen-
tre inundated with light, where rises on a lofty
and immovable rock the holy prize for which
every human heart is yearning. These are the
roads of which the sacred Scripture witnesseth,
saying, 'Semita justis recta est,**' 'Justum
deduxit Dominus per vias rectas, et ostendit illi
regnum Dei;† and also prophesied in the
words, 'Hæc erit vobis directa via, ita ut stulti
non errent per illam;† and also, 'Et erunt prava
in directa, et aspera in vias planas.††' And
yet to many 'how this present world seems as
the spot where mysteries converge, but to di-
verge afresh! How comes it that so often each
seems more like a man flying from something
that he dreads, as if from that fearful precipice
which Bossuet describes at the issue of the road

of life, towards which the human race is forced
to advance by an invincible force till it reaches
the fatal brink, into which it at last falls, rather
than one who seeks the thing he loves? It is
that man may forget the end of his course, and
then that the impulse given him to attain it will
remain; and if he mis-employs it, he uses it only
to lead himself more astray, descending into
deeper and deeper gloom. It is that in the fore-
cast of life there are certain fearful springs, which
make dizzy and insane those who quaff them;
certain wild flames that lure the traveller on
with treacherous dance till he is lost in the dark
wilderness—error his guardian, and the night
his bride; certain strange images, at float be-
fore the soul of the wearied till he sleeps like
Endymion; certain false guides that recom-
mended fatal turns into crooked paths, for, as
St. Thomas of Villanova says, 'while the paths
of the just are straight, the impious walk in a
circle, always proceeding, and never making
any progress.¶ The way of God is a straight
way, and therefore, as St. Bruno remarks, the
Psalmist prays, saying, 'Directum me fac in
semita recta;† but the enemies of man ever
strive to turn him aside into curved paths having
no issue, which only wind round and round the
centre, and never join it. Wandering on
through the dark thickets, he crosses, it is true,
at each step the straight, even paths to eternal
peace; but his will is not moved to follow them;
the dark fiend there casts his shadow; still he
turns right or left whither the wood is most ob-
scure; and so walks round in error, often, alas!
irreparably lost, though still hearing on all sides
the gracious calls from everything, as well as in
silent books, which in their silence say more to
the mind than thunder to the ear; and yet men
listened not, nor listen; but walk darkling to
their doom.

'O infinite centre,' exclaims St. Thomas of
Villanova, 'infinite good, thence infinitely attrac-
tive, what can retard a creature capable of such
good from rushing into thee! O the weight of
sin which causes souls thus to recoil from their
true centre! It is as great a miracle to see
these souls suspended thus, detained from it by
every breath of wind, as it would be to see rocks
hanging in the air.¶ Yet this miracle is beheld
in each erring pilgrim through life's enchanted
forest, who follows false images of good.

Non agit in rectum, sed in orbem curvat eundem;
Ut volueris visis rapidissima milvius extus,
Flecutur in gyrum.¶

'Thus the wretched soul,' says St. Thomas of
Villanova, 'as no creature can suffice to her,
wanders round in a circle, through each with
great labour; as it is said of the wicked in the
Psalm, 'Caput eorum circumtus eorum,' and again
'In circuitu impij ambulat.' As nature, in-
deed, tends to unity, so do all wills; but then,
they being free, can turn withersoever each de-
sires, as there is not the same necessity in wills
that there is in nature.¶ The human will, there-
fore, by error thus misguided, describes a circle,
or, if converted only for a moment, concentric
circles.

'Non secus ac liquidis Phrygijs Mæander in
undis

Ludit, et ambiguo lapsu refluitque fluitque.¶
The way is straight; the very essence of truth,
as a great author says, is plainness and bright-
ness, the darkness and crookedness is our own.
The wisdom of God created understanding fit
and proportionable to truth, the object and end
of it, as the eye to the thing visible. If our un-
derstanding have a film of ignorance over it, or
be clear with gazing on other false glisterings,
what is that to truth? If men would but purge
with sovereign eye-salve that intellectual ray
which God has planted in them, then they would
discern the illumination of the pillar; and if no
other cause forbid, its beams would ever be their
guide. The notices, the signal posts, as it were,
in life's forest, are found in the olive groves of
Valencia, at every turn, standing on the side of
the road, and legible enough.

'No labyrinthus: e flexibus egredientem
Tenu frustraretur observabilis error.'

But if men will not read them, or be directed by
them, they are free to do so. The rabbins and
masters of the law of Moses were not converted
after seeing the miracles of the Messiah; and
St. Matthew followed Him at the first word which
he heard from His lips.

Though we are pressed by time, let us observe
in conclusion that human life was actually
shown to Marina de Escobar in mystic vision as
resembling a journey through such a region as I
have been describing. 'Here,' she says,
'were many roads and paths, some wide and
straight, leading directly upwards to a delicious
plain; others narrow and winding in different
directions, branching off on all sides into innum-
erable intricate tracks. 'See,' said an angel
to me, 'the diversity of ways which God em-
ploys for directing souls to their salvation. On
that straight way yonder, which represents the
divine law, I was lately guiding one that God
committed to me; and it proceeded for some
time safely, till it came to that narrow defile,
which signifies a great perfection, and then it
descended by that crooked path which you ob-
serve. Then I succeeded in leading it back
again; but the demon tempted it again to escape
from me, and so it turned down to that marsh,
where it engulfed itself; but I drew it out and

cleansed it, and again led it back to penitence,
and then God gave it such strength that it pro-
ceeded unflinchingly up those steep sides which
you see there, and then it came to the narrow
path of contemplation, by which it proceeded
along those strange unknown ways God alone
understands; for no one can tell whither they
lead, or where they end, further than that they
pass through solitude to God. But know, that
many souls whom we lead through these scenes
perish; by persisting in following tracks which
only bewilder and deceive.¶'

Among the books of Raymond Lully we find
'Liber de Vis Paradisi et Vis Inferni.' These
ways are thus multiplied, we might almost say,
to infinity; but all of them are reduced by St.
Bonaventura to two, of which he thus mystically
writes: 'To the two eternal manors of which
St. Augustin speaks there is approach by two
journeys: to the first we arrive by the investiga-
tion of reason with love; to the second by
damnable omission with grief. Our Lord Jesus
Christ, who is the way in which we go, the
truth to which we come, and the life in which
we shall remain, shows us both manors and the
two journeys, the one intrinsic and secret and
eternal in Himself, because He is the country
and habitation of the soul; the other extrinsic
and without Himself, which is the eternal exile
of the soul, where is weeping and gnashing of
teeth. The journey to the first manor is by the
multifarious way of access to Himself; that to
the second by the multifarious ways of depart-
ure from Himself. It shall be my endeavour
in the course of this work to show, by passages
extracted from ancient books, what are the jour-
neys by which the human spirit proceeds and ar-
rives at that intrinsic secret and eternal manor,
and to point out how many of these converging
paths the pilgrim has crossed, having at each
intersection guidance afforded to the centre,
which, if followed, would have led him to it
from the first. We shall find, however, that
even while resisting the central attraction, and
forcing, as it were, a passage from it through the
entangled thickets of error, there will be still
some openings at his side to direct him back to
the beauty that he flies from. Moreover, we
find that with a good intention it may be even
sometimes well, for the purpose of exploring
the immensity of truth, to take, as it were, the
side-alleys or by-ways which branch off from
the main roads, looking so solemn and inviting
to the fancy; for by keeping in memory the di-
rection of the principal lines, there will be so
little risk of losing the way while we acquire
the experience of mysteries, that, as Autolyeus
sings, even when we farthest wander here and
there, we then shall by reason of that acquire-
ment, most go right. But whether we follow
the direct avenues, or strike off with prodence
into the by-ways, we shall come to the conclu-
sion that all roads through the intellectual or
the spiritual forest can lead men, under celestial
guidance, to the source and summit of perfec-
tion, which is faith in the one holy Catholic and
Apostolic Church. 'Multis viis ad Deum ten-
duntur,' as Cassian says. We shall observe how
even the saints, separated often during the jour-
ney, found themselves together during the end;
and therefore we shall learn never to censure
those who pursue a different path from ours, or
become discontented with our own. Thus vast
is the region through which we are now about to
direct our course. 'Though,' as Sir John Maun-
deville says, 'traweth not that I will telle you
all the townes and castelles that men schulle go
by; for than shoulde I make a large tale.' The
main roads and many of the side-alleys I will
show which lead through life's forest to the
Church; and 'with all helpful service I will
lead ye where ye may more near behold what
shallow-searching books have left untold, and
what contemplative men fall oft amidst these
shades alone, have sat to wander at and gaze
upon.'

'Sunt quibus novum opus est intactæ Palladis
arces

Carmine perpetuo celebrare.'

The attraction of the Church shall be my
theme. Her worth I will essay to celebrate;
and so 'I bend ye towards her glittering state';
though all I can is nothing to her, whose worth
makes other worthies nothing, she being herself
alone. It is through her woods that we shall
wander, where as on the luxurious banks of riv-
ers in the new world we may behold, suspended
on the course of waters, grouped on rocks and
mountains, dispersed in valleys, trees of all
forms, of all colours, of all perfumes, mixing,
growing together, and mounting into the air to
heights which fatigue and baffle vision. 'For,
as St. Thomas of Villanova says, 'the Church,
having to keep up on earth a perpetual fire, that
of charity, must needs possess for this purpose
vast forests. Truly these are not wanting to
her. She has immense woods where she cuts
down daily; and such is their density and extent
that they can never be exhausted. She has the
vast wood of creatures, the wood of the Scrip-
tures, the wood of examples, daily rising up in
the Church. She has fuel to abundance; but
the fire only God can give.'

The past therefore shall rise, and we shall be-
hold the present. For the world in all its im-
mensity and variety is comprised within the for-
est of the Church containing those trees of life,
each tree bearing such precious fruits which An-
tonio de Escobar so carefully describes.¶ There

* Hom 36 in Ev.
† Dante in 2.
‡ De Sacro Altaris Myst
§ Itinerarium mentis in Deum 5.
¶ Phn Nat Hist ii.
‡ Etudes sur les idées et sur leur union au
sein du Catholicisme, ii
** Esquisse de Mem. Chretienne, i. 140.
†† n. 25.

* St Thom Vill Dom xvii post Pent 11.
† Epist xlv. † Milton.
‡ Vesp The Wasps, 77.
§ Tract 20 in Joan. ¶ De Repub. vii
• Isa xxvi. †† Sap x
†† Isa xl

* Etudes sur les Idées. &c.
† De S Adelerino. Sermo.
‡ St Bruno in Ps xxvi.
§ Dom xvii post Pent 11
¶ Ovid Met ii 716
‡ Ovid viii 3.

* Vt Ven Virg Mariane, &c i lib i c 8.
† De Septem Invenibus Aternitatis Prolog.
‡ I. P. Rigacci l'Art de traver avec Dieu.
§ Serm de Assumpt Virg 10.
¶ In Evang Comment tom i.