

**ECCLESIA, THE CHURCH
OF CHRIST: A PLANNED
SERIES OF PAPERS**

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Ecclesia, the church of Christ: a planned series of papers by Arnold Harris Mathew

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ARNOLD HARRIS MATHEW

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OF CHRIST: A PLANNED
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ECCLESIA
OR, THE CHURCH
OF CHRIST



ECCLÉSIA:

The Church of Christ

A Planned Series of Papers by

Dom Gilbert Dolan, O.S.B.

Fr Benedict Zimmermann, O.D.C.; Fr R. H. Benson, M.A.

Dom John Chapman, O.S.B.; Dom J. D. Breen, O.S.B.

A. H. Mathew & Fr Peter Finlay, S.J.

Edited by

ARNOLD HARRIS MATHEW

"A glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any
such thing"—*Ephes. v, 27*

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Imprimi potest

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Episcopus Arindelensis
Vicarius Generalis

Westmonasterii die 12 Sept., 1906

THE PREFACE

IN arranging this volume my desire has been to provide a concise and simple explanation of what Catholics understand by "the Notes" of the Christian Church. To the Reverend Fathers who have kindly contributed articles, written independently one of the other, I desire to express my thanks.

The reader will do well to bear in mind that our Lord founded His visible Church and that it had become recognized, widespread and numerically powerful before any portion of the New Testament was written. The divine religion, inaugurated and provided with various marks and prerogatives by Christ, had no need of any books as sources of knowledge or doctrine, since it was endowed with the full deposit of revelation by our Lord from the beginning, together with safeguards divinely appointed for the preservation and transmission of that revelation to the human race for all time.

The earliest of the Gospels was not written until thirty or more years had elapsed after the Ascension. The Primitive Church was, consequently, without sacred books. Instead of deriving her teaching from the sacred writings the Church began her mission before they existed, and consequently the authors of the New Testament Scriptures derived much of their knowledge of the teaching and life of our Lord from the Church. The Holy Scriptures, instead of being the source or

rule of faith, are, to Catholics at any rate, a record of the teaching of the Church in the first ages, a record confirmatory and corroborative of the faith, but one which was never intended to supplant the divine authority of the living voice of the Church.

Nothing is more clearly indicated throughout the New Testament than the divine and indefectible character of the visible *Ecclesia* instituted by Christ and designed by Him to be the ark of salvation for, and the oracle of, His revelation to, mankind.

Whereas Protestantism, in all its varying forms, professes to be based upon Scripture, and to be absolutely dependent upon it, Catholicism proclaims the eternal infallibility of the Church, independently of any book, by virtue of the abiding presence within her of the Spirit of Truth, her voice being, in all authoritative utterances, the very voice of her Divine Author Himself. Before the New Testament existed, before its inspired books were collected together, before they were translated from the languages in which they were originally written, long before the copies of the New Testament had been multiplied by the laborious process of transcription, ages before the invention of the art of printing, the Catholic Church was here, preaching the glad tidings of the Gospel, offering up the adorable Sacrifice of the New Law "in every place," administering the sacraments and making disciples of all nations. What she did in her earliest days she has ever since continued to do in the same way, and she will not have completed her task until the end of all things is reached. Sects may come and sects may go, but the Church is

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eternal because she is divine, and consequently one and indivisible, holy, Catholic both in time and extent, apostolic and Petrine—that is papal. Not only does the Church instituted by Christ possess all these distinguishing marks or notes, but so conspicuous are they that she can be recognized at a glance as the only institution upon earth possessing these visible indications of her divine origin and character.

A. H. MATHEW

Chelsfield, Kent