

E. E. HOLMES

***THE CHURCH:
HER BOOKS
AND HER
SACRAMENTS***

E. E. Holmes

The Church: Her Books and Her Sacraments

Enriched edition.

Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Colin Finch

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Table of Contents

[**The Church: Her Books and Her Sacraments**](#)

[Memorable Quotes](#)

[Notes](#)

THE CHURCH: HER BOOKS AND HER SACRAMENTS

Main Table of Contents

[TO H. F. B. M.](#)
[INTRODUCTION](#)
[THE CHURCH.](#)
[CHAPTER I.](#)
[CHAPTER II.](#)
[CHAPTER III.](#)
[CHAPTER IV.](#)
[CHAPTER V.](#)
[CHAPTER VI.](#)
[CHAPTER VII.](#)
[CHAPTER VIII.](#)
[CHAPTER IX.](#)
[CHAPTER X.](#)
[CHAPTER XI.](#)
[CHAPTER XII.](#)
[INDEX.](#)

TO H. F. B. M.

[Table of Contents](#)

INTRODUCTION

[Table of Contents](#)

These Lectures were originally delivered as the Boyle Lectures[\[1\]](#) for 1910, and were afterwards repeated in a more popular form at All Saints, Margaret Street[\[2\]](#). They are now written from notes taken at their delivery at All Saints, and the writer's thanks are due to the kindness of those who lent him the notes. Some explanation of their elementary character seems called for. The Lecturer's object was twofold:—

(1) To remind an instructed congregation of that which they knew already—and to make them more grateful for the often underrated privilege of being members of the Catholic Church; and

(2) To suggest some simple lines of instruction which they might pass on to others. Unless the instructed Laity will help the Clergy to teach their uninstructed brethren, a vast number of Church people must remain in ignorance of their privileges and responsibilities. And if at times the instructed get impatient and say, "Everybody knows that," they will probably be mistaken. Many a Churchman is ignorant of the

first principles of his religion, of why he is a Churchman, and even of what he means by "the Church," just because of the false assumption—"Everybody knows". Everybody does not know.

It seems absurd to treat such subjects as *The Church, Her Books, Her Sacraments*, in half-hour Lectures; but, in spite of obvious drawbacks, there may be two advantages. It may be useful to take a bird's-eye view of a whole subject rather than to look minutely into each part—and it may help to keep the Lecturer to the point!

E. E. H.

THE CHURCH.

[Table of Contents](#)

CHAPTER I.

Table of Contents

THE CHURCH ON EARTH.

Christus Dilexit Ecclesiam: "Christ loved the Church"[1]—and if we love what Christ loved, we do well.

But three questions meet us:—

- (1) What is this Church which Christ loved?
- (2) When and where was it established?
- (3) What was it established for?

First: *What is the Church?* The Church is a visible Society under a visible Head, in Heaven, in Paradise, and on Earth[1q]. Who is this visible Head? Jesus Christ—visible to the greatest number of its members (i.e. in Heaven and in Paradise), and vicariously represented here by "the Vicar of Christ upon Earth," the Universal Episcopate.

Next: *When and where was it established?* It was established in Palestine, in the Upper Chamber[4], on the first Whitsunday[3], "the Day of Pentecost[2q]".

Then: *What was it established for?* It was established to be the channel of salvation and sanctification for fallen man. God may, and does, use other channels, but, "according to the Scriptures," the Church is the authorized channel.

As such, let us think of the Church on earth under six Prayer-Book names:—

- (I) The Catholic Church.
- (II) The National Church.
- (III) The Established Church.
- (IV) The Church of England.

(V) The Reformed Church.

(VI) The Primitive Church.

(I) THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

The Creeds call it "the *Catholic* Church" and describe its doctrine as "the *Catholic* Religion," or the "*Catholic* Faith". The Te Deum, Litany, and Ember Collect explain this word "Catholic" to mean "the holy Church *throughout all the world*," "*an universal* Church," "*thy holy* Church universal"; and the Collect for the King in the Liturgy defines it as "the *whole* Church". The "Catholic Church," then, is "the whole Church," East and West, Latin, Greek, and English, "throughout all the world".^[2] Its message is world-wide, according to the terms of its original Commission, "Go ye into *all the world*".

Thus, wherever there are souls and bodies to be saved and sanctified, there, sooner or later, will be the Catholic Church. And, as a matter of history, this is just what we find. Are there souls to be saved and sanctified in Italy?—there is the Church, with its local headquarters at Rome. Are there souls to be saved and sanctified in Russia?—there is the Church, once with its local headquarters at Moscow. Are there souls to be saved and sanctified in England?—there is the Church, with its local headquarters at Canterbury. It is, and ever has been, one and the same Church, "all one man's sons," and that man, the Man Christ Jesus. The Catholic Church is like the ocean^[3q]. There is the Atlantic Ocean, the Indian Ocean, the Pacific Ocean: and yet there

are not three oceans, but one ocean. The Atlantic Ocean is not the Indian Ocean, nor is the Indian Ocean the Pacific Ocean: they are all together the one universal ocean—"the ocean".

But, after all, is not this a somewhat vague and nebulous conception of "The Church". If it is to go into all the world, how, from a business point of view, is this world-wide mission, in all its grandeur, to be accomplished? The answer is seen in our second name:—

(II) THE NATIONAL CHURCH.

For business and administrative purposes, the world is divided into different nations. For business and practical purposes, the Church follows the same method. The Catholic Church is the channel of "saving health to all nations". As at Pentecost the Church, typically, reached "every nation under heaven," so, age after age, must every nation receive the Church's message. The Universal Church must be planted in each nation—not to denationalize that nation; not to plant another National Church in the nation; but to establish itself as "the Catholic Church" in that particular area, and to gather out of it some national feature of universal life to present to the Universal Head. Thus, a National Church is the local presentment of the Catholic Church in the nation. As Dr. Newman puts it: "The Holy Church throughout all the world is manifest and acts through what is called *in each country*, the Church Visible".

As such, the duty of a National Church is two-fold. It must teach the nation; it must feed the nation. First: it is the function of the National Church to teach the nation. What is its subject? Religion. It is to teach the nation religion—not to be taught religion by the nation. It is no more the State's function to teach religion to the authorities of the National Church[3] than it is the function of the nation to teach art to the authorities of the National Gallery. Nor, again, is it the function of a National Church to teach the nation a *national* religion; it is the office of the Church to teach the nation the *Catholic* religion—to say, in common with the rest of Christendom, "the Catholic religion is this," and none other. Thus, the faith of a National Church is not the changing faith of a passing majority; it is the unchanging faith of a permanent Body, the Catholic Church. Different ages may explain the faith in different ways; different nations may present it by different methods; different minds may interpret it in different lights; but it is one and the same faith, "throughout all the world".

A second function of the National Church is to feed the nation—to feed it with something which no State has to offer. It is the hand of the Catholic Church dispensing to the nation "something better than bread". When a priest is ordained, the Bishop bids him be "a faithful dispenser of the Word of God, and of His holy Sacraments," and then gives him a local sphere of action "in the congregation where thou shalt be lawfully appointed thereunto".[4] Ideally, this is carried out by the parochial system. For administrative purposes, the National Church is divided into parishes, and thus brings the Scriptures and Sacraments to every

individual in every nation in which the Catholic Church is established. It is a grand and business-like conception. First, the Church's *mission*, "Go ye into all the world"; then the Church's *method*—planting itself in nation after nation "throughout all the world"; dividing (still for administrative purposes) each nation into provinces; each province into dioceses; each diocese into archdeaconries; each archdeaconry into rural deaneries; each rural deanery into parishes; and so teaching and feeding each unit in each parish, by the hand of the National Church.

All this is, or should be, going on in England, and we have now to ask when and by whom the Catholic Church, established in the Upper Chamber on the Day of Pentecost, was established in our country.

(III) THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH.

The Catholic Church was established, or re-established, [5] in this realm in the year 597.[6] It was established by St. Augustine, afterwards the first Archbishop of Canterbury. How do we know this? By documentary evidence. This is the only evidence which, in such a case, is final. If it is asked when, and by whom, our great public schools were established, the answer can be proved or disproved by documents. If, for instance, it is asked when, and by whom, *Winchester* was established, documents, and documents only, can answer the question—and documents definitely reply: in 1387, by William of Wykeham; if it is asked when, and by whom, *Eton* was established, documents answer: in

1441, by Henry VI; if it is asked when, and by whom, *Harrow* was established, documents respond: in 1571, by John Lyon; if it is asked when, and by whom, *Charterhouse* was established, documents again reply: in 1611, by Sir Thomas Sutton. It can all be proved by, and only by, documentary evidence. So with the sects. Documents can prove that the Congregationalists established themselves in England in 1568, under Robert Brown; Quakers in 1660, under George Fox; Unitarians in 1719, under Samuel Clarke; Wesleyans in 1799, under a Wesleyan Conference. Records exist proving that these various sects were established at these given dates, and no records exist proving that they were established at any other dates. So with the Church. Records exist proving that it was established by Augustine, in England, in 597, and no records exist even hinting that it was established at any other time by anybody else.

"As by Law Established."[\[7\]](#)

A not unnatural mistake has sometimes arisen from the phrase "*as by law established*". Where is this law? It does not exist. No law ever established the Church of England. The expression refers to the protection given by law to the Catholic Church in England, enabling it to do its duty in, and to, the country. It tells of the legal recognition of the Church in the country long before the State existed; it expresses the legal declaration that the Church of England is not a mere insular sect, but part of the Universal Church "throughout all the world". A State can, of course, if it chooses, establish and endow any religion—Mohammedan, Hindoo, Christian,

in a country. It can establish Presbyterianism or Quakerism or Undenominationalism in England if it elects so to do; but none of these would be the Church of Jesus Christ established in the Upper Chamber on the Day of Pentecost. As a matter of history, no Church was ever established or endowed by State law in England.[8] If such a tremendous Act as the establishment of the Church of England by law had been passed, it is obvious that some document would attest it, as it does in the case of the establishment of the Scotch Presbyterian Church in the reign of William III. No such document exists. But an authentic record does exist proving the establishment of the Pentecostal Church in England in 597. It is this old Pentecostal Church that we speak of as the Church of England.

(IV) THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

Who gave it this name? The Pope.[9] It was given by Pope Gregory in a letter to Augustine. In this letter[10] Gregory speaks of three Churches—the Church of Rome, the Church of Gaul, and the *Church of the English*, and he bids Augustine compile a Liturgy from the different Churches for the "Use" of the Church of England.

We see, then, that the Church of England is the Catholic Church in England. As the Church of Ephesus is the Catholic Church in Ephesus, or the Church of Laodicea is the Catholic Church in Laodicea, or the Church of Thyatira the Catholic Church in Thyatira, so the Church of England is the Catholic Church in England. Just as St. Clement begins his Epistle to