

## DIALOGUE CONCERNING TYNDALE: BK. 2. CH. 1-8

### THE SECOND BOOK

#### THE FIRST CHAPTER

*The Messenger recapitulating certain things before proved and for his part agreeing that the church of Christ cannot in any necessary article of the faith fall in any damnable error, doth put in doubt and question which is the very church of Christ, alleging that they peradventure whom we call heretics will say that themselves is the church, and we not. Whereof the author showeth the contrary, declaring whereby we may know that they cannot be the church.*

AFTER dinner we walked into the garden, and there shortly sitting in an arbour began to go forth in our matter, desiring him to show what thing might that be that made our long forenoon's process frustrate and left us as uncertain as we began.

Sir, quod he, that shall I shortly show you. Whereas there was principally in question whether worshipping of images and relics, praying to saints, and going on pilgrimages, were lawful or not. And that I put you in mind that men laid against them certain texts of holy scripture, and also said unto you that it seemed the text's self, which be the words of God, were of more authority against them than the glosses of men that in such wise expound the texts as they may seem to make for them: ye laid on the other side the consent and agreement and common catholic faith of the church, which ye said and indeed, to say the truth, both by reason and scripture, ye proved that it could not be erroneous, and

#### **THE CHURCH CANNOT ERR IN FAITH**

that the church could not err in the faith that God would have known and believed. Ye proved the matter also by miracles. In which when I laid divers things moving men to doubt, partly lest they were not true, but specially lest they were not done by God for corroboration of the faith, but were percase by God's sufferance done by the devil for our delusion, deserving so to be served by our falling from he worship of God himself to the worship of his creatures, ye proved in yet again

#### **MIRACLES MUST NEEDS BE DONE BY GOD**

that the miracles were true; and that they must needs one by God. And that ye proved me by this that it should else follow that the church had a wrong belief and a damnable. Which, eftsoons, ye proved well and substantially to be impossible. And forasmuch as there fell in the way occasion to speak of the contrariety that seemed sometime to fall between the texts of holy scripture's self, and the common persuasion and faith of the church, where I said that it was thought reasonable to believe the scripture, being God's own words rather than the words of men, ye therein proved that the common faith of the church was as

#### **THE COMMON FAITH OF THE CHURCH IS GOD'S OWN WORD**

well God's own words as was holy scripture's self, and of as great authority, and that no student in scripture should presume to try, examine and judge the catholic faith of Christ's church by the scripture, but, by the catholic faith of Christ's church should examine and expound the texts of scripture. And that in the study of scripture this were the sure way, wherein should give, you said, great light the writing of the old holy doctors, whereby we be ascertained that the faith that the church hath now is the same faith and the same points that they had then of old in every age and every time. And in this part ye proved yet again by

### **THE CHURCH RATH THE RIGHT UNDERSTANDING OF SCRIPTURE**

reason and holy scripture that the church hath by the teaching of God and the holy ghost the right understanding of scripture in all points that are of necessity to be known. And thereupon, eftsoons, ye deduced and proved that no text of scripture, well understanden, could stand against the worshipping of images and relics, and the seeking of pil-grimages; but that all these things be well proved good and pleasant to God, and the miracles done in such places done by God, since his special assistance so informeth and instructeth his church in so great and so substantial an article, so highly touching the honour or dishonour of God, that it cannot be suffered to fall to superstition and idolatry instead of faith and honour done to God. And this is, quod he, as far as I remember, the whole sum and effect of all that hath hitherto been proved between us.

Very true, quod I. And this is of you very well remembered, and well and summarily rehearsed.

But now, quod he, all this gear granted, we be never the near[er].

Why so, quod I?

Marry, quod he, for a man that believed the worship of images to be wrong and unlawful might grant that, that the church doth not err, and that the church hath the right faith, and that the church doth not mistake the scripture. And when all this were agreed, he might say, that the church peradventure doth not believe as ye say it doth. For he might haply deny the church to be that people that ye take it for, and say that it is the people that believeth as he believeth, that is, to wit, all these kinds of worship to be wrong, and that [he] believeth them whom ye take for the church to believe wrong.

If he and his company, quod I, be the church, he must tell where his fellows be?

Why so? quod he, if men should ask you and me where the church is we could tell no one place but many divers countries.

Let him, quod I, in likewise assign some companies that be known for congregations together in divers countries.

Why? quod he. In the beginning, and a good while after, the church of Christ in every place hid itself, that men could not tell in any country where they were, nor durst not come out and show themselves.

That was in the beginning, quod I, while the persecution lasted. But when the persecution ceased once it was soon known in every country where the church was.

Marry, quod he, if I should take that path, I would haply say that in that case it is still, and that the church is that company peradventure that ye, which call yourself the church, do use to call heretics, which now do know one another well enough and call themselves and their fellows about the world the very church, though they dare not profess it openly, because that ye, that call yourself the church and them heretics, do persecute them as the church of the paynims did in the beginning. And therefore they do hide themselves as the church did in the beginning. But and if you would cease your persecution once, and let them live in rest, you should see them flock together so fast, that they should soon show you the church with a wet finger.

They might, quod I, peradventure show a shrewd sort within a while, if they were suffered, and the church that the prophet David speaketh of, *Odi ecclesiam malignantium*, I hate the church of malicious men. <sup>1</sup> But they shall never show themselves the church of Christ. The church of Christ wheresoever it was in all the persecution used to come together to the preaching and prayer, though it were privily in woods or secret houses. They used also the sacraments among themselves, as baptism, confirmation, matrimony, holy order, priests and bishops among them, fastings, vigils kept, the sundays hallowed, the mass said, holy service sung, and their people houseled, as well appeareth, not only by the stories of the church but also of the paynims. And partly well appeareth by a pistle of Pliny <sup>2</sup> written to the Emperor Trajan. And such things must there be therein, if it be any church or congregation of Christ's. Now these people, that ye speak of, use no such things among themselves, and therefore they cannot be the church of Christ.

They preach, quod he, privily among themselves, and all [the] remnant they do in our churches. This, quod I, plainly proveth that they cannot be the church of Christ. For the church of Christ ever fled and forbore the temples in which idols

#### **A PLAIN DENYING OF CHRIST**

and mammettes were. And it was a plain denying <sup>3</sup> of Christ's faith to do any observance thereto, though they did it only with their body for fear and thought the contrary with their heart. For our Lord saith, "He that denieth me before the world, I will deny him before my Father in heaven." <sup>4</sup> And holy scripture saith, *Spiritus sanctus effugiet fictum*, the Holy Ghost fleeth from feigning. <sup>5</sup> But these men, whom you call the church, come to the churches where the images be which they take for idols, and there they come to service with us whom they take for idolaters, and where they teach among themselves that we do nought, they come to our church, as I say, and in face of the world they do the same, kneel to images as we do, set up candles as we do, pray to saints as we do, and haply more loud with their mouths while they mock them with their hearts. And over this many mock also the sacraments which they receive. And this putteth me in mind also that, besides all this, ye cannot say that these be the church whom we call heretics; but ye must tell which kind of them is the church. For all cannot be, since the church is and must be all of one belief, and have all one faith. And as it was written in the Acts of the apostles, *Erat multitudo credentium, anima una et cor unum*. The multitude of faithful believing men were all of one mind and of one heart. <sup>6</sup> And in the church is the holy ghost, *qui facit unanimes in domo*, which maketh all of one mind in the house of God, that is in the church. But as for among heretics, there be as many divers minds almost as there be men. The church of Christ also is a thing that alway hath stand and continued. But the sects of heretics and their churches never continued but shortly decayed and vanished quite away, so far forth, that of all the old heretics the books also be gone and lost when there was no law made yet to burn them, so that it is easy to see that God himself destroyed them, and the world clean gave them up at some time though new heretics,

now long after, take them up again. For if their opinions had anywhere continually endured there would their books have continually reserved which be now quite gone many years ago. And thus may you well see that there can no such folk be the church that in so many years have no church nor come to none, but to theirs in which, they say themselves, they worship idols.

Well, quod he, peradventure they will not stick much to assign you a place and show you a company and congregation, which they will say is the very church. For what if they will show you Boheme, and now in Saxony where Luther is, and peradventure in a good part of Germany? Marry, quod I, if they say so, then leap they like a flounder out of a frying pan into the fire. For in Saxony first and among all the Lutherans there be as many heads as many wits. And all as wise as wild geese. And as late as they began, yet be there not only as many sects almost as men,

### **BEHOLD THE INCONSTANCY OF HERETICS**

but also the masters themselves change their minds and their opinions every day and wot never where to hold them. Boheme is also in the same case. One faith in the town, another in the field. One in Prage, \* another in the next town. And yet in Prage itself one faith in one street. another in the next. So that if you assign it in Boheme, ye must tell in what town. And if ye name a town, yet must ye tell in what street. And yet all they knowlege \* that they cannot have the sacraments ministered but by such priests as be made by authority derived and

### **THE POPE HEAD OF THE CHURCH**

conveyed from the Pope which is under Christ vicar and the head of our church.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER

*The author showeth that no sect of such as the church taketh for heretics can be the church forasmuch as the church was before all them, as the tree from which all those withered branches be fallen.*

THAT none of all these can be the church shall well appear also by another means. Whether will ye say that the very church and congregation of Christ was before all the churches and congregations of heretics, or some church of heretics before the church of Christ?

Marry, quod he, there might be some church of heretics before the church of Christ. For there might be some among the Jews before the birth of Christ. And such I suppose were the Sadducees that believed not the resurrection nor the immortality of the soul.

If we should go, quod I, to that reckoning, we might fetch the church of Christ far above, and begin it at Adam. For from the first good man to the last, all shall in conclusion be his church triumphant in heaven. But I speak of Christ's church now as of the congregation that bearing his name and having his right faith and, being begun to be gathered by himself and spread abroad by his apostles, hath and doth and shall, till his coming to the dreadful doom, continue still in this world. Whether was this church before all the churches and congregations of heretics, or some one of them before it?

Nay, quod he, I think it was before them all.

Whereby may we, quod I, be sure of that?

Marry, quod he, for always the heretics came out of it.

That is, quod I, true. For they could be none heretics but by being first therein, and alter coming out. And it appeareth by the gospel, in which the good husbandman went forth to sow his seed. And when he had sown good seed then the enemy sowed his evil after; and they grew up together. <sup>u</sup> It appeareth also by the words of the apostle and holy Evangelist St. John, where he said of heretics, *E nobis profecti sunt, sed non erant ax nobis*. They be gone, he said, out of us, but they were none of us <sup>u</sup> -meaning that or ever they professed themselves openly for heretics, yet being such indeed since the church of Christ is a people of one faith, these folk that have another special faith by themselves, varying and gainsaying the other, be not perfectly of the church though they be for the while in it. So it is now that any member of that body till it be cut off for fear of corruption of the remnant, hangeth on it in a manner and some little light or life hath by the spirit of God, that upholdeth the body of his church, being ever in case to take occasion of amendment by some vein of that wholesome moisture of God's grace that specially spreadeth about that holy body. But those that by the profession of heresies and infidelity fall off from the body or, for fear of corrupting the remnant be by curse cast out of the body, they plainly dry up and wither away. Our Saviour sayeth himself, "I am," sayeth he, "a very vine, and my father is a gardener. I am the vine and ye be the branches. And every branch that beareth in me no fruit my father taketh it away. And every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it to make it bring the more fruit. And as the branch can do no good being taken from the tree, right so can ye do no good nor serve to nought but for the fire except ye abide in me." <sup>u</sup> By these words of our saviour, and many more there spoken at length, though it appeareth that who so keep the faith, yet except he work well therewith, God will pluck

#### **WE MUST WORK WITH FAITH**

him out; and whoso by faith abiding in the stock doth work good works, the more he doth, the more grace and help shall have of God, to grow the better and to do the more; yet appeareth it also that all the good works that may be done will not serve if we be out of the stock. And out of the stock of the vine be all that be not grafted in by faith or fallen off by open profession of heresy or cut off and cast out for infidelity. For faith is the gate into God's church, as unbelief is the gate into the devil's

#### **WITHOUT FAITH WE CANNOT COME TO GOD**

church. For as the apostle saith, *Accedentem ad deum oportet credere*, a man cannot come to God without faith. <sup>u</sup> And therefore whoso professeth a false belief, let him be sure that he is gone out of the gate of God's church before actual excommunication and fallen off the body of the vineyard. And if they be secret, neither professing their heresies nor actually being accursed and cast out, they be in the church but not perfectly of it. But in such wise in a manner thereof be they as a dead hand is rather a burden in the body than verily any member, organ, or instrument thereof. And therefore saith St. John, as I said before, that the heretics be gone out of us, but they were not of us. For if they had been of us they would have tarried with us <sup>u</sup> —meaning thereby, not as some would have it seem, that a good man is not of the church nor in God's favour while he is good, because he happeneth to wax worse afterward; but he meaneth that, in that they went their way from us, they showed that they were nought in deed while they were with us. And so though they were with us yet were they not of us. For though heretics and infidels be among

faithful and well believing people yet be they, perde, none of them. And so it appeareth, as ye said before, that the church of Christ is before all the churches of heretics; and that all congregations of heretics have come out of the church of Christ.

That is very true, quod he.

Well, quod I, if that be true, as it is indeed, then can no sect in Boheme be the right church. For that church which we call the church, that believeth as we believe, was there before them all. And never a church had any church of heretics yet but it was builded by our church to their hands. So that it is evident that none of all them can be Christ's church, but Christ's church must needs be that church that was before all them and out of which all they have sprung and since severed themselves, which is the church that all they deny not to believe against them the points which we believe and they reprove.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER

*The Messenger moveth that the very church peradventure is not the people thatwoe take for it; but a secret unknown sort of such only as be by God predestinate to be saved. Whereunto the author answereth and declareth that it cannot be so.*

PERADVENTURE, quod he, there might be said that it needeth not to assign any place where the very church and true Christian congregation is. But since every place is indifferent thereunto, it may be that all the good men and chosen people of God that be predestinate to be saved, in what part soever they be and how so ever they be scattered here one and there one, here two and there two, that these be the very church of Christ and be in this world unknown as yet while the church doth but wander in the pilgrimage of this short life.

Marry, quod I, this gear groweth from worse to worse. And in very deed yet is this point their sheet anchor. For, first, they see

#### **THE CHURCH CANNOT MISTAKE HOLY SCRIPTURE**

plainly that they must needs grant that the very church can neither be deceived in the right faith nor mistake holy scripture or misunderstand it to the introduction of infidelity and false belief. And this ground find all the heretics themselves so sure and fast, that they perceive well, except they would openly and utterly deny Christ altogether, it cannot be undermined. And since they manifestly see that, and as evidently see therewith that the church (which is the very church indeed) danmeth all their ways, whereof, since the church cannot err in discerning the truth, it must needs follow that they mistake themselves all the whole matter and be quite in a wrong way—therefore be they driven to deny for the church the people that be known for the church, and go seek another they neither know what nor where, [and] build up in the air a church all so spiritual that they leave therein, at length, neither God nor good man. And first where they say that there be none therein, but they that be predestinate to be saved, if the question were of the church triumphant in heaven, then said they well. But we speak of the church of Christ militant here in earth, and therefore goeth their frame as far wide from the place they should set it on, as heaven

and earth stand asunder. For first would I wit if the church be none but those that be predestinate, whether all that be predestinate be members thereof?

Why not, quod he?

Then, quod I, he that is predestinate to be saved, whether may he or not be divers times a sinner in his days?

What if he may, quod he?

May he not, quod I, be also divers times in his days in a wrong belief and false heresy, and after, turn, repent and amend, and so be saved at last as God hath predestinate him to be?

What then, quod he?

Marry, quod I, for then shall it follow, that he shall be a member of the very church and so still continue, and never can be cast out being a stark heretic.

Yet, quod he, is he all that while a quick member of the church, by reason of God's predestination, since though he be not sure, yet it is indeed sure, that he is and ever shall be one of the very church.

It is, quod I, sure indeed and well known that he shall so be. But as sure is it that for the while he is not, except that all thing that ever shall be is already present in deed, as it is present to God's knowledge. And then were St. Paul as good while he was a persecutor, as when he was apostle, and as verily a member of Christ's church or he was born as he is now in heaven.

Well, quod he, though that peradventure all those that be living and predestinate to be saved be not in it, yet may it be that there be none other in it than predestinates.

But it may be, quod I, that as men be changeable, he that is pre-destinate may be many times in his life nought. And he that will at last fall to sin and wretchedness, and so finally cast himself away, shall in some time of his life be good and therefore for the time in God's favour. For God blameth nor hateth no man for that he *shall* will but for that malicious will that he hath or hath had already. And thus shall there be by this reason good men out of Christ's church and naughty men therein, faithful men out of it, and heretics in it, and both the one and the other without reason or good cause why.

#### THE FOURTH CHAPTER

*The Messenger moveth that though the church be not the number of folk only predestinate to bliss, yet may it peradventure be the number of good and well believing folk here and there unknown, which may be peradventure those whom we condemn for heretics for holding opinion against images. Whereof the author proveth the contrary.*

WELL, quod he, yet may it be that the very church of Christ is all such as believe aright and live well wheresoever they be though the world know them not, and though few of them knew each other. For God, as St. Paul saith, know who be His. <sup>15</sup> And Christ saith, that against his church the gates of hell shall not prevail; <sup>16</sup> but the gates of hell do prevail against sinners. And therefore it appeareth well that there can be no sinners in his church, nor that there be none of his church but good folk. And unto them our Lord is present and keepeth them from errors, and giveth them right understanding of his holy scriptures. And where they be forceth not, how few they be together maketh no matter. For our Saviour saith, “Wheresoever be two or three gathered together in my name, there am I also among them.” <sup>17</sup> And so is his very church here and there of only good men to the world unknowen; and to himself well knowen. And though they be few in comparison, yet make they about in all the world a good mayny among them. As God said when the children of Israel were fallen to idolatry and worshipped the idol Baal so far forth that it seemed all were in the case and men knew not who were otherwise; yet said our Lord as appeareth in the xix chapter thirde boke of the Kings, “I shall reserve or myself seven thousand that have not bended their knee before Baal.” So that where the synagogue and church was then it was unknowen to man; but it was well knowen to God. And they were not his church that seemed to be, but a company ungathered that no man was ware of, nor would have went. And so may it peradventure now, that the very church of Christ is not, nor many days hath not been, the people that seemeth to be the church, but some good men scattered here and there unknowen till God gather them together and make them knowen, and haply those that believe against images and whom we now call heretics.

This is, quod I, a reason that Luther maketh himself. By which he would bring the very church of Christ out of knowledge, and would put it in doubt whether the saints that the church honoureth were good men or not, and would that it might seem peradventure nay, but that they were haply not good. But the good men and saints indeed were some other whom the world for their open lewd living reputed for nought. But where he saith that the church or synagogue of the right belief was then unknowen, that is not true. For it was well knowen in Jerusalem and Judea, though it had been unknown who were faithful in Samaria. And the scripture also saith not that these seven thousand, whom he would leave yet in Israel that had not bowed their knees before Baal, were secret and unknowen, but he saith only that such a number of such folk he would leave. But now for our purpose, since ye will have the very church a secret unknowen, not a company and congregation, but a dispercled <sup>18</sup> number of only good men, will you that those good men which, after your reckoning, make the very church, shall have the same faith and none other than we have, which be now reputed for the church, or else a faith and belief different?

What if they have the same, quod he?

Marry, quod I, then will your new builded church nothing help your purpose. But they shall as fast confirm the worship of images, praying to saints, and seeking to pilgrimages as we, and as deeply condemn for heresy your opinion to the contrary.

That is very truth, quod he. But it may be that of the very church the faith and belief shall be that all this gear is erroneous and as plain idolatry as was the worshipping of Baal.

If that were so, quod I, then had Christ not kept him seven thousand from the worship of Baal, in all the regions that bare the name of Christen-dom, except these new folk of Saxony and Boheme which yourself grant to be the heretics as sects come out of the church. And more than wonder were it if all the church of Christ should be dean among infidels and heretics and no part at all thereof among the great unchangeable Christian countries which have kept their faith in one constant fashion derived from the beginning. For this am I sure, that in all those regions, as I say, if any have any such opinion against images and saints, yet cometh he to the church among his neighbours and there boweth his knees to Baal (if the images be Baal) as his neighbours do. But go to, let us forth on a little further. And supposing that there were some such secret good folk, as ye speak of, that had the right belief and were the right church, and that they were so dispersed asunder that they were to the world unknowen, hath not God set an order in his church that some shall preach to the remnant for exhortation of good living and information, wherein good living standeth, as in faith and good works?

Yes, quod he.

Had not Christ, quod I, sacraments also to be ministered in his church by the priests of the same?

Yes, quod he.

Now, quod I, if some infidels, as Turks or Saracens, having heard of Christ's name, did long to know his scripture and his faith, and hearing that there were many people who professed themselves for Christian men, whole nations, but they were all open idolaters and in a misbelief, and dearly deceived and beguiled, and that specially by the clergy that teacheth them: howbeit, there were yet a few good folk and right believing, which were not deceived, which among them be the very true church, but who they be or where they be or how to ask for them, or if he happen on them yet whereby to know them, that can no man tell him, how should these infidels come to the faith, and of whom should they hear it? For they being warned before that there were many sects of heretics, and but one true church, would never be so mad to learn of them that they might ween were wrong. And how should they now come to the right when the true church is unknown?

They might, quod he, take the scripture.

They should, quod I, be therein like to Enochus that could not understand without a reader. " And then if they took a wrong reader of a wrong church all were marred. And also they would not trust the scriptures nor reckon that they had the right books of scripture among false sects, but would look to receive the true scripture of the right and true church. And thus here it appeareth if it were thus, God had left none ordinary way for his gospel and faith to be taught. But let go these infidels and speak of ourself which are (if this way were true) as false as they. Where be then the preachers of this very church that should preach and teach us better? For it is no church if it have no preachers.

It hath, quod he, some that preach sometime; but ye will not suffer them; ye punish them and burn them.

Nay, quod I, they be wiser than so. They will not be burned for us for they will rather swear on a book that they never said so, or else that they will no more say so. And in this appeareth that there is no such secret unknown church of Christ that, having such opinions, is the very church. For the very church bath ever had some that bath abidden by their faith and their preaching, and would never go back with God's word to die therefore. And this church that we be of, that take your church for heretics, have had many such martyrs therein, that believed as we do against your opinions, as appeareth by the histories and by many of their books; whereas of your secret church I never yet found or heard of anyone in all my life, but he would forswear your faith to save his life. Where be also your priests and your bishops? For such must they have if they be the church of Christ. Now such can your church have none (since) ye be each to other unknowen. And though some of such churches have a false opinion that every man is a priest and every woman too, yet this heresy false as it is, will not serve this unknowen church. For the holders of that opinion do put that no man may, for all that, take upon him to preach or meddle as priest, till he be chosen by the congregation. And where can that be in this imaginary church, of which no man knoweth other? Ana whereas our Lord saith, "Wheresoever be two or three gathered together in my name, there am I with them," <sup>20</sup> He spake not as though every two or three whatsoever they were should make his church, but that wheresoever there came together two or three in his name that be of his church there is he with them. And so doth that one text of scripture in the gospel plainly declare, as it is well set out and opened by the holy doctor and glorious martyr St. Cyprian in his epistle against Novatian. When our Saviour saith also that he which would not amend by his fault, showed him before two or three witness, should be complained upon unto the church. <sup>21</sup> Did he mean a secret church which no man wist where to find? Now when the apostle writeth unto the Corinthians, that rather than they should plead and strive in the law before the infidels they should set such as were in the church little set by to be judges in their temporal suits, <sup>22</sup> of what church did he speak? Of such one as no man wist where to seek it? This unknowen church which they be driven to seek, that be loath to know the church, will never serve. But the church of Christ is a church well knowen. And his pleasure was to have

### **THE CHURCH CANNOT BE HID**

it knowen and not hid. And it is builded upon so high a hill of that holy stone, I mean upon Christ himself, that it cannot be hid. *Non potest abscondi civitas supra montem posita*, The city cannot be hid that is set on a hill. <sup>23</sup> And he would have his faith divulged and spread abroad openly, not alway whispered in hugger-mugger. And therefore he bound his preachers to stand thereby and not to revoke his word for no pain. For he said that he did not light the candle to put it and hide it under a bushel; for so would no man do; but he had kindled a fire which he would not should lie and smoulder as coals doth in quench; but he would it should burn and give light. <sup>24</sup> And therefore folly were it to say that Christ, which would have his church spread through the world and everywhere gathered in company, would have it turned to a secret, unknowen, single sort, severed asunder and scattered about in corners, unknowen to all the world, and to themself too.

Now where they say that there is none of the church but only those that be good folk, this would make the church deafly unknowen, were the people never so many and the place never so large. For who can know of that multitude who be good in deed and who be nought, since the bad may suddenly be mended unaware to the world, and the good as suddenly waxen worse. Now lay they for the proof of the opinion the words of Christ which Luther allegeth also for the same intent in his book that he made against Ambrosius Catherina, <sup>25</sup> that is to wit the words wherein our Lord

said unto St. Peter that against his church the gates of hell should not prevail, <sup>26</sup> by which words Luther doth, as he thinketh and saith himself, marvellous gaily prove that there can be no maxi of the church but he that sinneth not. For this argument he

### **LUTHER'S FOOLISH ARGUMENT**

maketh: Christ saith that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church; but the gates of hell is nothing but the devil and he prevaieth against all folk that sin; *ergo* no folk that sin be the church. And by this worshipful argument it is a world to see what boast the mad man maketh, that he hath clearly proved that the church is not these people whom we take for the church, because they be sinners, which argument hath so many follies and faults therein, and so much inconvenience and absurdity following thereupon, that it is more than marvel that a child of one week's study in sophistry could for shame find in his heart to bring it in place for any earnest argument. For first, if men deny him that the gates of hell do in that place Signify the devil, then he can never prove it, and then is all his reason wiped quite away. Now do there in. deed divers old commentors and doctors of the church take in that

### **THE GATES OF HELL**

place for the gates of hell, the great tyrants and heretics by whose per-secutions and heresies, as it were by two gates, many a man hath gone into hell; and our Saviour promiseth in the place that neither of those two gates—that is to wit, neither paynim tyrant nor christened heretic— should prevail against the church. For though they have destroyed and shall destroy many of the church; yet shall they not be able to destroy the church. But the church shall stand and be by God preserved in despite of all their teeth. And thus ye see how soon Luther's special arguments were overthrown with truth.

But if a man would grant him that the gates of hell did here signify the devil, yet should we not need to grant him that the devil, as he is called of God by that name of the gates, which is not done for nought, doth prevail against every man that sinneth. For he that sinneth, and riseth again out of sin—end so cometh within the gates, as yet the gates cannot hold him but that he breaketh out of the gates—the gates do not prevail against him; but he prevaieth against the gates. And thus is Luther's wise argument, which he groundeth upon that text, avoided again.

It appeareth also that it is a very frantic argument. For where he saith, that against the church of Christ the gates of hell prevail not, but they prevail against our church, that is to wit, all the Christian people whom we call the church under obedience of the Pope; *ergo* they be not of the church: this argument prove that there is in earth no church at all. For what church can he find or imagine in earth that doth not sin—and specially if that were true that himself saith among his other heresies where he holdeth stiffly that all the good works of good men be sins and that men sin in that they do good? And thus he would both have the church to be only a secret unknowen sort of folk that do not sin; and yet he confesseth that there be none such. And so as he goeth about to take away the very church that is well knowen, waking as though he would find out a better, he leaveth in conclusion no church at all. And to such a fond and false end must they needs bring it all, that will make it a number of only such as be good men and do not sin.

For if he should be in it always when he is out of sin, and out of it when he is in sin, then should a man peradventure be in it in the morning and out of it at none, <sup>27</sup> and in again at night. So that who were in it, or when, or where it were, who could tell? And of that uncertainty must needs grow all such inconveniences and contradiction unto scripture, as is before rehearsed. The church

therefore must needs be the common

### **WHAT THE CHURCH IS**

known multitude of Christian men, good and bad together, while the church is here in earth. For this net of Christ hath for the while good fishes and bad. And this field of Christ beareth for the while good corn and cockle, till it shall at the day of doom be purified, and all the bad cast out, and the only good remain. And therefore when the apostle wrote unto the Corinthians <sup>28</sup> of him that had lain <sup>29</sup> a with his mother-in-law, he commanded that he should be separate out of the church. Which he never was after the deed done, till the excommunication denounced, but was still for all his sin one of the church, though he was nought and out of God's favour. Christ himself said to his apostles, Now be you clean but not all, <sup>30</sup> and yet were they all of his church. Albeit that one of them was, as our Saviour said himself a devil. Did I not (said he) choose twelve of you and one of you is a devil? <sup>31</sup> And if there were none of the church but good men as long as they were good, then had St. Peter been once no part of the church after that Christ had appointed him for chief. But our Lord in this his mystical body of his church, carried his members some sick, some whole, and all sickly. Nor they be not for every sin clean cast off from the body, but if they be for fear of infection cut off, or else willingly do depart and separate themselves as do these heretics, that either refuse the church wilfully themselves, or else for their obstinacy be put out. For till their stubborn hearts do show them incurable, that body beareth them yet about sick and naughty and cay <sup>32</sup> a cold as they be, to prove whether the warmth of grace going through this whole mystical body of Christ's church might get yet and keep some life in them. But when the time shall come that this church shall whole change her place and have heaven for her dwelling in stede of earth, after the final judgment pronounced and given, when God shall with his spouse, this church of Christ, enter into the pleasant wedding chamber to the bed of eternal rest, then shall all these scalded and scabbed pieces scale clean off, and the whole body of Christ's holy church remain pure, clean and glorious without wem, wrinkle or spot, which is—and for the while I ween will be, as long as she is here—as scabbed as ever was Job. And yet her loving spouse leaveth her not, but continually goeth about by many manner medicines, some bitter, some sweet, some easy, some grievous, some pleasant, some painful, to cure her.

### **THE FIFTH CHAPTER**

*The author showeth and concludeth that this comen known ,multitude of christian nations, not cut off nor fallen off by heresies, be the very church of Christ, good men and bad together.*

AND finally—to put out of question which is Christ's very church, since it is agreed between us and granted through christendom and a conclusion very true that by the church we know the scripture—

### **BY THE CHURCH WE KNOW THE SCRIPTURE**

which church is that by which ye know the scripture--

Is it not this company and congregation of all these nations that, without factions taken and precision from the remnant, profess the name and faith of Christ? By this church know we the scripture; and this is the very church; and this hath begun at Christ and

hath had him

### **PETER CHRIST'S VICAR**

for their head, and saint Peter his vicar, after him, the head under him, and alway since, the successors of him continually—and have had his holy faith, and his blessed sacraments, and his holy scriptures delivered, kept, and conserved therein by God and his holy spirit. And albeit some nations fall away, yet likewise as how many boughs soever fall from the tree—though they fall more than be left thereon—yet they make no doubt which is the very tree, although each of them were planted again in another place and grew to a greater than the stock he came first of; right so, while we see and well know that all the companies and sects of heretics and schismatics—how great soever they grow—came out of this church that I spake of, we know evermore that the heretics be they that be severed, and the church the stock that all they came out of. And since that only the church of Christ is the vine that Christ spake of in the gospel, <sup>33</sup> which he taketh for his body mystical; and that every branch severed from that tree loseth his lively nourishing, we must needs well know that all these branches of heretics fallen from the church—the vine of Christ's mystical body—seem they never so fresh and green, be yet indeed but witherlings that wither and shall dry up, able to serve for nothing but for the fire.

### THE SIXTH CHAPTER

*The Messenger moveth, that since the church is this knowen multitude of good men and bad together, of whom no man knoweth which be the one sort and which be the other, that it may be peradventure that the good sort of the church be they that believe the worship of images to be idolatry, and the bad sort they that believe the contrary. Which objection the author doth answer and confute.*

WHEN I had said [what I had to say], Sir, quod he, ye have in good faith fully satisfied me concerning the sure and undoubted knowledge of the very church here in earth. But yet thinketh me that one little doubt remaineth for our principal matter.

What is that, quod I?

Marry, Sir, quod he, it is this: that though the very faith be in the church; and the church cannot err therein; nor the church cannot be the other were nought too, then were in the church none good. But yourself deny not but in the church it must needs be that there be some good. And there can be none but either your part or the other. *Ergo*, since yours be nought, those that be good must needs be the other. But none of those that be of the other could be good men if they were idolaters and pursued your part for saying the truth, and compelled them to deny the truth, *ergo*, the other part be not idolaters, nor the opinion of your part, for which they pursue your part, be not true. And thus it appeareth as meseemeth, that good men of the church be against you and the naughty with you.

### THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

*The author somewhat doth corroborate the truth against the heresies holding against images, and recapitulating somewhat briefly what hath been proved, so finisheth and endeth the proof of his part.*

AND yet speak I nothing of all the good men and well-known for good men, and holy men and now saints in heaven that have condemned your part and written against you. And your part therefore be so sore against saints again, because they see their heresies impugned and condemned by their holy writings. Nor besides this have I nothing spoken of the general councils condemning your part by good and substantial authority, comprobate \* and corroborate by the whole body of Christendom—led thereunto both long before and ever since through the secret operation of the holy ghost, who could never suffer, as yourself agreeth, the church of Christ to continue so whole and so long in so damnable idolatry as this were if it were superstition and not a part of very faith and true devout religion. Wherefore since I have proved you that the church cannot err in so great a point, nor, against the right faith, mistake the sentence of holy scripture; and also that these people that believe images to be worshipped be the very church of Christ; and that of his church the good and bad both doth use it, and the good men doth it truly and the bad falsely; and that all the good men of old hath allowed and used this way, and condemned the contrary, which hath also been declared for false heresy by the whole general council of Christendom, approved by the faith and custom of all the people beside—growing into such consent by God's holy spirit that governeth his church—I never need to go further or touch your texts or arguments to the contrary. For this side thus proved good, it must needs follow that the other side is nought: except ye have against this any further thing to say. Which if ye have, never let to bring it forth. For I will for none haste leave any corner of the matter unransacked, as far as we can any doubt find therein.

In good faith, sir, quod he, I am in this matter even at the hard wall, and see not how to go further.

Now I assure you, quod I, [that] if I could myself find any further objection I would not fail to bring it in. But in good faith I suppose we be waded in this matter as far as we can both find. And I am sure as far as ever Luther found, or any that ever I have seen, that anything have said or written on that side.

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

*The author entereth the answer to the objections that have been before laid by the Messenger against the worship of images, and praying to saints, and going on pilgrimages. And first he answereth in this chapter, the objections made against praying to saints.*

NOW therefore, as I say, further need I not to go. But yet will I somewhat touch the things which, as ye say, do move many men to take the worship of images for idolatry. And it, so taken, and their opinion so reputed, they reckon it a ground to think that miracles done at the images or by invocation of the saints to be illusions of the devil. And first will we begin at the saints themselves. And by the way shall we speak of their relics, images, and pilgrimages, as there shall occasion rise in our matter. And for the first in good faith saving that the books and writings of holy doctors condemn these men's heresies, the displeasure and anger whereof setteth them on a fire to study for the minishing of their estimation that so stand in their light; else would I much wonder what these heretics mean, to impugn the worship of saints and forbid us to pray to them. And albeit I now see the cause of their malice, yet can I not much the less marvel of their madness that show their evil will so openly that they neither have reason nor good colour to cloak or cover it with. First they put in doubt whether saints can hear us. And if they do, yet whether they can help us. And finally, if they could, yet would they we should think it folly to desire them, because God can do it better and will do it sooner himself than they all.

Now where they doubt whether saints hear us, I marvel whereof the doubt ariseth, but if they think them dead, as well in soul as body. For if their holy souls live, there will no wise man ween them worse and of less love and charity to men that need their help, when they be now in heaven than they had when they were here in earth. For all that while were they never so good yet the best was worse than the worst is now. As our Saviour said by St. John the Baptist that there was no woman's son greater than he; yet the least that was already in heaven was his better. <sup>35</sup> We see that the nearer that folk draw thitherward, the more good mind bear they to men here. And therefore St. Stephen when he saw heaven open for him, he began to pray for them that maliciously killed him. <sup>36</sup> And think we then, that being in heaven, he will not vouchsafe to pray for them that devoutly honour him, but hath less love and charity, being there, than he had going thitherward? If the rich man that lay in hell had yet not only for fear of increase of his own punishment by his brother's damnation growing of his evil ensample in sin, but also of carnal love and fleshly favour towards his kin—which fleshly affection being without grace or virtue may per-adventure stand with that state of damnation—had a cure and care of his five brethren, were it likely that saints, then being so full of blessed charity in heaven, will nothing care for their brethren in Christ whom they see here in this wretched world? Now if there be no doubt—as I trow none there is—but their holy souls be alive, they would we did well. And as little doubt but that they be alive if God be their God as He is indeed, and he not the God of dead men but the living <sup>37</sup>, as our Saviour saith in the gospel. For all men live still, and ever shall, that he hath taken to him and once given life unto. There resteth then no further to see but whether they can do us any good or no—either for that

#### **WHETHER SAINTS CAN HELP US**

for they cannot hear us, or for that they cannot help us. And first I marvel much if they think they cannot help us. For while they were here they could, as appeareth in the acts of the apostles. And since imbecility and lack of power is here part of our misery, and strength and plenty of power is one great part of wealth, they were well furthered in that point, if they were now less able to do good to them whom they fain would were holpen than they were before. For whether they be able there to do it themselves, or only by their intercession made unto God, this maketh no force for our matter, so that by their means, the one way or the other, we take help by our devotion towards them, and prayer made unto them.

I think, quod he, they may do indeed much more than they might both by power and prayer. But it is hard somewhat to think that they should hear us and see us, and specially in so many places at once. For though they be not circumscribed in place, for lack of bodily dimension and measuring, yet are they and angels also definitely so placed where they be for the time, that they be not at one time in divers places at once as saints be in sundry countries, and very far asunder, called upon at once.

Ye marvel, quod I, and think it hard to be believed that saints hear us. And I, while we see that the things that we pray for we obtain,

#### **WHETHER SAINTS HEAR US**

marvel much more how men can doubt whether the prayers be heard or not. When saints were in this world at liberty and might walk the world about, ween we that in heaven they stand tied to a post? But the wonder is how they may see and hear in sundry places at once. If we two could no more but feel, and neither see nor hear, we would as well wonder, or if we could not wonder thereof because we could not hear thereof, yet should we be far from any conceiving in our minds that it were possible for man to see or hear further than he can feel. For we that prove it, and do see and hear indeed, cannot yet see the cause, nor in no wise cease to wonder by what reason and mean it may be that I should see two churches or two towns, each of them two a mile asunder, and both twain as far from me as each of them from other, and measure so great quantities with so small a measure as is the little apple of mine eye. And of hearing many men's voices or any man's words, coming at once into many men's ears, standing far asunder, hath like difficulty to conceive. And when all the reasons be made either of beams sent out from our eyes to the things that we behold, or the figure of the things seen, multiplied in the air from the thing to our eye, or of the air stricken with the breath of the speaker and equally rolling forth in rondels to the ears of the hearers—when all the reasons be heard, yet shall we rather delight to search than be able to find anything in these matters that were able to make us perceive it. Now when we may with our fleshly eye and ear in this gross body see and hear things far distant from us, and from sundry places far distant asunder, marvel we so much that blessed angels and holy souls, being mere spiritual substances uncharged of all burdenous flesh and bones, may, in doing the same, as far pass and exceed us and our powers natural, as the lively soul herself exceedeth our deadly body, nor cannot believe they hear us though we find they help us but if we

#### **THE MEANS HOW SAINTS DO HELP US**

perceived by what means they do it—as whether they see and hear us coming hither to us, or our voice coming hence to them, or whether God hear and see all and show it them, or whether they behold it in him, as one doth in a book the thing that he readeth, or whether God by some other way doth utter it unto them, as one doth in speaking—except we may know the means we will not else believe the matter? As wise as were he that would not believe he can see, because he cannot perceive by what means he may see.

Yet see I, quod he, no cause or need why we should pray to them, since God can as well, and will as gladly, both hear us and help us as any saint in heaven.

What need you, quod I, to pray any physician to help your fever, or pray and pay any surgeon to heal your sore leg, since God can hear you and help you both, as well as the best, and loveth you better and can do it sooner, and may afford \* his plasters better cheap, and give you more for your words than they for your money?

But this is his pleasure, quod he, that I shall be holpen by the mean of them as his instruments, though indeed all this he doth himself, since he giveth the nature to the things that they do it with.

So hath it, quod I, pleased God, in like wise, that we shall ask help of his holy saints and pray for help to them. Not that is not a making of them equal unto God himself, though they do it by his will and power or he at their intercession. Though God will, as reason is, be chief and have no match, yet forbiddeth he not one man to pray for help to another. And though the father hath given all the judgment to his Son, yet doth he delight to have his holy saints petitioners of that honour, and at the day of judgment to have them sit with him. <sup>39</sup> Was Eliseus made equal to God because the widow prayed him to revive her dead son? <sup>40</sup> Were the apostles equal to Christ because that they were prayed unto for help after his death and in his life also? And many things did they at folks' prayers. And sometime they were prayed unto, and assayed it also and yet could not do it; <sup>41</sup> but the parties were fain to go from them to their master therefore. And yet was he content that they were prayed unto. And for proof thereof suffered them at men's devout instance and prayer to do many miracles. And sometime were they prayed to be intercessors to their master. As where they came to Christ and said, *Dimitte illam quia clamat post nos*, Despatch this woman for she crieth upon us. <sup>42</sup> And think you then, that he being content and giving men occasion to pray to them while they were with him in earth, he will be angry if we do them as much worship when they be with him in heaven? Nay, but I think on the other side, since his pleasure is to have his saints had in honour and prayed unto, that they may be for us intercessors to his high majesty whereunto, ere we presume to approach, it becometh us and well behoveth us to make friends of such as he hath in favour. He will disdain once to look on us, if we be so presumptuous and malapert fellows that upon boldness of familiarity with himself we disdain to make our intercessors his especial beloved friends. And where St. Paul exhorteth us each to pray for other <sup>43</sup> —and we be glad to think it well done to pray every poor man to pray for us—should we think it evil done to pray holy saints in heaven to the same?

Why, quod he, by that reason I might pray not only to saints but also to every other dead man.

So may ye, quod I, with good reason if ye see none other likelihood but that he died a good man. And so find we, as I remember in the dialogue of St. Gregory, <sup>44</sup> that one had help by prayer made unto an holy man late deceased which was himself yet in purgatory. So liked it our Lord to let the world know that he was in his special favour; though he were yet in pain of his purgation. For our Lord loved him never the

#### **NOTE**

less though he left not for him the order of his merciful justice. And therefore let no man take his trouble or sickness as a token of God's

#### **HOW SICKNESS IS A TOKEN OF GOD'S HATRED**

hatred. But if he feel himself grudge and be impatient and evil content with it, for then is it a token of wrath and vengeance and is to the sufferer as fruitless as painful—and in effect nothing else but the beginning of his hell, even here. But on the other side, if he take it patiently, it purgeth; if gladly, it greatly meriteth. <sup>45</sup> And glad may he be that is with meekness glad of God's punishment. Sainte Austine, as is written by Possidonius, <sup>46</sup> lying sore sick himself of an ares, <sup>47</sup> cured another with his prayer; and yet he died of his sickness himself. Wherein there was to him

more mercy and favour shown than if himself had been cured

too. For now instead of health he had heaven where he should never more be sick again.

Marry, quod he, but I have ever heard it said, that we should not pray to any dead man but with this condition, “If thou be a saint, then pray for me.”

Why so, quod I, more than praying to a quick man, where I am not bound to say, “If thou be a good man, pray for me.” But since I may reasonably think him good, while I know him not the contrary, so may I think him that is dead.

Why, quod he, whereof serveth canonising them? If this be true I am never avised to be canonised while I live.

Ye do the better, quod I, nor seven year after neither. For it would be, but a business for you.

But why be they then canonised? quod he.

Those, quod I, that be not canonised, ye may for the more part both pray for them and pray to them, as ye may for and to them that

#### **PRAYER TO THOSE THAT BE CANONISED**

be yet alive. But one that is canonised ye may pray to him to pray for you, but ye may not pray for him. For as I remember, St. Austin saith, that he that prayeth for a martyr doth that martyr injury. And of every man ye may trust well and be seldom certain, but of the canonised ye may reckon you sure.

<sup>1</sup> Ps. 25. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Pliny to the Emperor Trajan, A.D. 103.

<sup>3</sup> Renaying.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. 10. 33.

<sup>5</sup> Wis. I. 5.

<sup>6</sup> Acts 4. 32.

<sup>7</sup> Ps. 132. I.

<sup>8</sup> Prauge.

<sup>9</sup> Acknowledge.

<sup>10</sup> Luke 8. 7.

<sup>11</sup> I John 2. 19.

<sup>12</sup> John 15. 5, 6.

<sup>13</sup> Heb. II. 6.

<sup>14</sup> I John 2. 19.

<sup>15</sup> Tim. 2. 19.

<sup>16</sup> Matt. 16. 18.

<sup>17</sup> Matt. 18. 20.

<sup>18</sup> Dispersed, scattered.

<sup>19</sup> Acts 8. 31.

<sup>20</sup> Matt. 18. 20.

<sup>21</sup> Matt. 18. 17.

<sup>22</sup> I Cor. 6. 4.

<sup>23</sup> Matt. 5. 14.

<sup>24</sup> Luke II. 33.

<sup>25</sup> Italian theologian : died 1439.

<sup>26</sup> Matt. 16. 18.

<sup>27</sup> Noon.

<sup>28</sup> Icor. 5, 1-5.

<sup>29</sup> Lyen.

<sup>30</sup> John 13. 10.

<sup>31</sup> John 6. 71.

<sup>32</sup> Key.

<sup>33</sup> John 15. 1-6

<sup>34</sup> Approve, confirm.

<sup>35</sup> Matt. II II.

<sup>36</sup> Acts 7. 60.

<sup>37</sup> Mark 12. 27.

<sup>38</sup> A forth.

<sup>39</sup> Matt. 19. 28.

<sup>40</sup> 4 Kings 4

<sup>41</sup> Mark 9. 27.

<sup>42</sup> Matt. 15. 23.

<sup>43</sup> Eph. 6. 18.

<sup>44</sup> Cannot be verified.

<sup>45</sup> When More was about twenty-five, he gave a series of lectures in the church of St. Lawrence, Old Jewry, of which his friend Grocyn was rector, on St. Augustine's *de Civitate Dei*. This passage is possibly a reminiscence of that. At any rate, the similarity is interesting; and the thought both profound and consoling. "Good and bad men," writes St. Augustine, "suffer alike; but we must not suppose that there is no difference between the men themselves, because there is no difference in what they suffer. For as the same fire causes gold to glow brightly, and chaff to smoke; and under the same flail the straw is beaten small, while the grain is cleansed. And thus it is, that in the same affliction, the wicked detest God and blaspheme, while the good pray and give praise. The real difference, then, lies not in what ills are suffered but in what kind of man suffers them; for, stirred with the same movement, corruption gives forth a horrible stench but ointment, a goodly fragrance..."

<sup>45</sup> "And there is another reason why the good are afflicted with temporal calamities—the reason exemplified in the case of Job—that the human spirit may be proved, and that it may be shown forth with what a brave and gracious piety, and with what a dis-interested love, it cleaves to God. We know that to them that love God, *all* things work together unto good (*Rom.* 8. 28). The faithful and godly lost all they had. But did they lose their faith? Their godliness? Did they lose the possessions of the hidden man of the heart which in God's sight are of great price? For these are the wealth of Christians, to whom the wealthy apostle said, 'Godliness with contentment is great gain.' They, then, who lost their worldly all in the sack of Rome, could say in the words of

job, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away... blessed be the name of the Lord.' Like a good servant Job counted the will of his Lord his great possession; by obedience to which his soul was enriched; nor did it grieve him to lose, while yet living, those goods which he must shortly leave at his death." *de Civitate Dei*, i. 9 & 10.

<sup>45</sup> This sound and comfortable doctrine which More had read at twenty-five, and re-written at fifty, was to stand him good stead at fifty-six, when he was imprisoned; and at fifty-seven, when he was martyred.

<sup>46</sup> Possidius, *Augustini Vita*.

<sup>47</sup> Ares ( *aresco* ), fever, "axes" also suggested.