

THE DOCTRINE OF THE LIBERAL CATHOLIC CHURCH

FOREWORD

"The Liberal Catholic Church believes that there is body of doctrine and mystical experience common to all the great religions of the world and which cannot be claimed as the exclusive possession of any. Moving within the orbit of Christianity and regarding itself as a distinctively Christian church it nevertheless holds that the other great religions of the world are divinely inspired and that all proceed from a common source, though different religions stress different aspects of this teaching and some aspects may even temporarily drop out of recognition. These teachings, as facts in nature, rest in their own intrinsic merit. They form that true Catholic faith, which is Catholic because it is the statement of universal principles in nature.††-from The Statement of Principles.

The following Summary of Doctrine is a concise official statement of what the bishops of the Church have from its beginning unanimously held to be such universal principles in nature, which, while of course not exhaustive, forms the only basis of a rational universe, the creation or emanation of a universal Deity who is the source and embodiment of Love, Compassion, Immutable Law and Eternal Life.

While the bishops, who feel that they have been entrusted by our Lord with the

guidance of this New Reformation in His Church, believe that these Doctrines are Eternal Truth and that all men must and will eventually come to accept them and live in accordance with them, they make no demand that anyone accept any of them as a condition of membership or of communion; however, as pointed out in the final paragraph, candidates for the priesthood who are to be leaders in the Church will be selected only from among men who have already come, through their own intuition to accept these doctrines in their general sense as being truths which they can honestly teach to others who are seeking Truth.

SUMMARY OF DOCTRINE

1. The existence of God, infinite, eternal, transcendent and immanent. He is the one existence from which all other existence derived. 'In him we live and move and have our being.' (Acts xvii, 28).

2. The manifestation of God in the universe under a triplicity called in the Christian religion, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; three Persons in one God, co-equal, co-eternal, the Son alone-born¹ of the Father, the Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son. The Father, the source of all; the Son, 'The Word who was made flesh and dwelt among us'; the Holy Spirit, the life-giver, the inspirer and sanctifier.

3. Man, made in the image of God, is himself divine in essence- a spark of the divine fire. Sharing God's nature, he cannot cease to exist, therefore he is eternal and his future is one whose glory and splendor have no limit.

4. Christ ever lives as a mighty spiritual presence in the world, guiding and sustaining his people. The divinity that was manifest in him is gradually being unfolded in every man, until each shall come 'unto a perfect man unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.' (Eph. iv, 13).

5. The world is the theatre of an ordered plan, according to which the spirit of man, by repeatedly expressing himself in varying conditions of life and experience, continually unfolds his powers. That evolution or spiritual unfoldment takes place under an inviolable law of cause and effect. 'Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall be also reap.' (Gal. vi, 7). His doings in each physical incarnation largely determine his experience after death in the intermediate world (or world of purgation) and the heavenly world and greatly influence the circumstances of his next birth. Man is a link in a vast chain of life extending from the highest to the lowest. As he helps those below him, so also he is helped by those who stand above him on the ladder of lives, receiving thus a 'free gift of grace'. There is a 'communion of saints' of 'just men made perfect' or holy ones, who help mankind. There is a ministry of angels.

6. Man has ethical duties to himself and to others, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind and with all thy strength. This is the first and great commandment, and the second like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.' (Matt. 22, 37-40) helped by those who stand above him on the ladder of lives, receiving thus a 'free gift of grace'. There is a 'communion of saints' of 'just men made perfect' or holy ones, who help mankind. There is a ministry of angels. 6. Man has ethical duties to himself and to others, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind and with all thy strength. This is the first and great commandment, and the second like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.' (Matt. 22, 37-40)

It is the duty of man to learn to discern the divine light in himself and others-that light 'which lighteth every man (St. John i, 9). Because men are sons of God they are brothers and inseparably linked together. That which harms one harms the entire brotherhood. Hence a man owes it as duty to the God within himself and others: first, to endeavor constantly to live up to the highest that is in him, thereby enabling that God within himself to become more perfectly manifest, and, secondly, to recognize the fact of that brotherhood by constant effort towards unselfishness, love, consideration for, service of, his

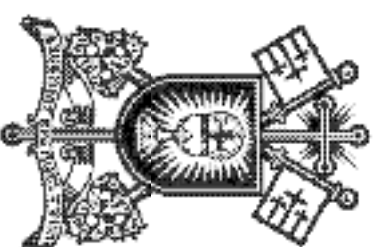
fellowman. Service of humanity and the sacrifice of the lower self to the higher are laws of spiritual growth.

7. Christ instituted various sacraments in which 'an inward and spiritual grace' is given unto us through 'an outward and visible sign.' There are seven of these rites which may be ranked as sacraments, namely, Baptism, Confirmation, the Holy Eucharist, Absolution, Holy Unction, Holy Matrimony, Holy Orders. The doctrine of these sacraments is sufficiently set forth in the authorized liturgy of the Liberal Catholic Church. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the living head of the church which he founded is the true minister of all sacraments.

EMBODIMENT OF DOCTRINE

Inasmuch as the Liberal Catholic Church welcomes to its membership all who are seeking truth, it does not require its members to accept this statement of doctrine, but the statement is to be regarded as embodying the distinctive contribution of the Liberal Catholic Church to Christian thought, and the bishops of the church are prepared to accept as candidates for ordination only those who find themselves in general agreement with it.

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