

THY KINGDOM COME

BY

WILLIAM STEPHENS KRESS

PRIEST OF THE OHIO APOSTOLATE

FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1912.

Nihil Obstat

Edward C. Kramer, D.D.

Censores Librorum

Imprimatur

✠ J. P. Farrelly

Bishop of Cleveland

Cleveland, 26 March, 1912



© 2024 Tradidi. All rights reserved. While the text of this work is in the public domain, this edition's formatting, design, and any additional materials are protected by copyright.

Printed on 10 August 2024

SKU: 123

Contents

Foreword	i
1. Why Have More Than One Church?	1
2. Is It Possible To Bring Catholics and Protestants Into One Body?	7
3. The Untenable Rule of Protestants.....	15
4. Insufficiency of the Bible.	21
5. Christ's Church.....	27
6. The Authoritative Teacher	35
7. How Can I Be Saved?	41
8. The School of God.	47
9. Identity of the Catholic Church With the Gospel Church	55
10. Doctrinal Development	61
11. The Deposit of Faith.	65
12. Did the Church Founded By Christ Grow Corrupt?	69
13. Is Persecution an Article of the Catholic Creed?.	77
14. Catholic and Protestant Countries Compared... .	81
15. The Catholic Church and Intellectual Progress..	87

Foreword

The plain, frank talks of this booklet are addressed to lovers of the Lord, Jesus Christ, whose supreme earthly desire it is to be enrolled among the loyal citizens of His Kingdom. This Kingdom is none other than His Church—a spiritual Kingdom, wherein the followers of the Master are to find the security of divine faith and the joy of participation in the divine life. No mention will be made in these pages of the abundant spiritual helps that, by direction of its highest Ruler, are bestowed upon the citizens of the Kingdom, through the sacraments and other means of grace, and by which the reign of the Spirit is inaugurated and advanced within the souls of the faithful, since our sole aim is to meet the questioning of the mind and to point out the way that leads to the secure possession of the truth. It is the one hope and desire of the author that this booklet, with the grace of the Holy Spirit, may fulfil its mission and bring many precious souls into the Kingdom.

WHY HAVE MORE THAN ONE CHURCH?

“And He sent them to preach the Kingdom of God”

Luke 9:2

The remark is often made that a kindlier feeling has arisen of late years between Catholics and Protestants. All well-disposed people hail the disappearance of bitterness from the domain of religion. Today men are willing, not only to acknowledge the honesty of those who differ with them, but we love to believe that they have come to that farther stage where they are able to discuss, calmly and dispassionately, the reasons that keep them apart. This is a big advance over the olden times, when prejudice was so violent that reason and charity alike were affected by it. It is a good thing to be able to reason clearly; for when you have fully allowed for all that is praiseworthy in particular doctrines, or the good faith of individuals, the ugly fact still remains that we, who ought to be one in belief and organization, are woefully divided. Christ prayed for unity: that we be one as He and the heavenly Father are one.¹ All who would be true disciples of the Lord should strive to bring about this unity.

The most religious and thoughtful of men see much to deplore in the multiplicity of sects; for multiplicity of sects

¹ John 17:21

means multiplicity of beliefs, and multiplicity of beliefs implies error. Everyone, we trust, realizes the truth of this. When, for instance, the Baptist pronounces the invalidity of the baptism that does not include total immersion, and sets up a wall of separation between himself and other Christian bodies, who maintain the validity of pouring and sprinkling, it is error that sets up that wall. If the truth were known to all about the requirements for the validity of baptism, there would be no cause for dispute; both sides to the controversy would then believe alike and there would be, at least, one sect less in the world. All the other differences among the hundreds of Christian denominations arise from the same cause: error.

Unity follows truth as closely as light does the sun. Truth and unity are a wedded couple; the marriage was made in heaven and is indissoluble. Error may be manifold; but truth is and must remain one. Add 5 and 4: the true answer is 9; the incorrect answers may be many, but the true answer must be one. St. Paul speaks of persevering in the unity of faith. God, who is truth, cannot but wish to be worshipped in truth. He cannot be pleased with error, since, if He is truth, error is a denial, in part, of God Himself. Error cannot be made to fit into the divine plan. God cannot, then, be pleased with a multiplicity of sects and cannot be worshipped rightfully through error, which, in the last analysis, means attempting to serve God through the instrumentality of unbelief. Christ's Church is the Kingdom of Truth. Sectarianism is a revolt against the Kingdom, even though the seceders have no intention of setting up a system of their own, contrary to Christ's. We say in the prayer

taught us by the Lord Himself: "*Thy Kingdom come!*" It is Christ's will that truth, and not error, shall reign triumphant and that men shall prove their allegiance to Him through absolute loyalty to the truth.

It will not do to close one's eyes to the real differences that exist in the beliefs of rival sects. It has been offered in extenuation by sectaries that these differences are not important; that they do not touch essential matters. In answer to this we need only remind the apologists of sectarianism that where the Scriptures do not distinguish between essential and non-essential beliefs, neither should we. Christ demands that we believe all that He has revealed under penalty of damnation. He does not excuse or condone disbelief in what some are pleased to call non-essentials. Moreover, the differences to be found among the various Christian bodies include what any intelligent person will admit to be very important divergences. What folly it would be to set up rival churches, if the differences were unimportant. It is surely an essential point whether Christ is God, or mere man; whether the Holy Ghost is a divine person, or only a divine operation; whether baptism is necessary to salvation, or is a mere consecration; whether, or not, there is original sin; whether the Eucharist is Christ's body, or only a piece of blessed bread; whether the Bible is the sole fount of revealed truth, or shares this distinction with the Spoken Word of the Apostles; whether Christ is a real savior and redeemer, or only an example and model for man's imitation; etc. If these divergences do not reach to the very core of religion, religion must be without any solid body of truth. These

divergences, and many others besides, exist today among those who style themselves followers of Christ.

May they continue thus, without honest and unceasing effort to extinguish the differences and establish the truth? No. It is certainly not in accord with God's will that error flourish side by side with truth, or that it receive the same honor from His followers. One meets with not a few people who, while admitting the wrongfulness of contradictory beliefs, yet never think it necessary on their part to make a real effort to set matters aright. They seem content to drift along, although forced to acknowledge that Protestantism—as a “cluster of rival religions,” to use a phrase of Newman's—is living out a conscious falsehood. Are they not partners in guilt? Are they not deceiving others by their example and lulling their own conscience into a false security?

They think it sufficient excuse that they were started wrong through no fault of their own, affecting to believe that the mistakes of one period need not be corrected by the fuller knowledge of maturer years. But we were started wrong in many other things, and none of us but would agree to call ourselves very stupid had we not corrected our errors as soon as they were noticed. It is humiliating, no doubt, to confess now that what was one's belief for years was false; hard to break with associations, dear as life itself, that lined and lighted the whole long journey; perhaps to have the door of the parental home closed upon one; to be charged with instability and even apostasy by esteemed friends; but what supreme folly it would be to continue on in the wrong direction, when it is question of the road to heaven. We

correct mistakes everywhere else, in history, the sciences, in business, in the daily affairs of life. We are ever ready to learn in secular matters; we should be still more eager for spiritual truth; eager to realize the Master's prayer: "*that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.*"²

² John 17:3

IS IT POSSIBLE TO BRING CATHOLICS AND PROTESTANTS INTO ONE BODY?

*“That you may be counted worthy of the Kingdom of God,
for which also you suffer.”*

2 Thess. 1:5

Among the many present-day religious leaders, who admit the wrongfulness of sectarianism, there is a movement for federation; a desire to formulate some basis upon which the divergent sects may act as one body. They have agreed beforehand that anything closer than a mere federation is impracticable; that the prospect of eliminating contradictory doctrines is absolutely hopeless. They desire to create a show of unity where unity is not. But to cover belief and unbelief with the same mantle and call it Christianity is a poor substitute for Christ’s Kingdom of Truth.

Could you picture to yourself a body of scientific workers coming together and agreeing to let truth and error lie side by side, without a real effort on their part to sift the one from the other? They would be unworthy of the name of scientists, if they were content to give error the same right as truth, or if they admitted the hopelessness of discovering the true one among conflicting views. The real scientist will make any sacrifice, however great, in the interest of truth; he does not consider it humiliating, but rather ennobling, to give up his erroneous notions; he desires to progress, to

advance in knowledge, not to remain stationary, much less to be a reactionary. He is loyal to truth. He puts us to shame if we are less loyal to spiritual truth; if we are content to be reactionaries in religious research.

If any maintain that it is not desirable to get into one fold, they should be honest enough to lay aside their name of Christian. Christ's religion is one. If they desire to exploit their own views, or propagate a new religious system, let them candidly put them forward as their own, and not present them as Christ's. With the proper counterfeit brand upon them no one will be in danger of being misled.

Our souls have been created for truth. Why should we not all become priests of truth? A minister once said to us: "If I knew the Catholic Church to be Christ's Church, I would have none of it." Strange language from one who professed himself a minister and follower of Christ! It was an unblushing admission that he would follow the divine teacher only so long as he was not required to give up his own opinions, however false. It is evident from his words that it was not truth that he was seeking. If we knew his communion were Christ's Church, we, for our part, would wish to join it, no matter what our preconceived notions about it. We do not desire our own, but God's will. We trust that minister has no disciples among the readers of this booklet. We are directing our remarks to lovers of truth, to those who are honestly repeating the petition in the Lord's Prayer: "*Thy Kingdom Come.*"

There is all the more reason for welcoming God's truth, inasmuch as our future happiness depends upon its acqui-

The rest of the pages have been removed from this preview..