

# **PRACTICAL AND DOCTRINAL SUGGESTIONS OF HOW TO WIN CATHOLICS FOR CHRIST**

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Dedicated to  
**RALPH V. GRAHAM**

Outstanding Gospel Preacher and Student of the Word of God through whom I was brought to the knowledge of the true church of Christ and to all those who firmly and boldly are striving for a complete return to New Testament Christianity all over the world.

## **PREFACE**

Since becoming a member of the church of Christ on October 15, 1950, I have been thinking to prepare for the brethren a brief exposition of the most important Catholic doctrines in a way that would help them to understand without misrepresentations the Romanist position and, at the same time, answer properly the main difficulties presented to them by Catholic friends and acquaintances. Such an idea, encouraged by many during my two missionary trips all over the country, is being realized finally with the publication of this book in which I have gathered together old and new material concerning traditional tenets of Roman Catholicism. Of course, a work such as this cannot be exhaustive in all its parts, due to the multiplicity of errors held by the Church of Rome, and therefore I have limited my investigation to some of them, hoping to continue the job in the near future, God willing.

The purpose of this book is two-fold, namely exposition and confutation of errors, and a constructive effort to establish the truth in the place of error. The immediate and practical consequence of this purpose is the spreading of the revealed truths of God among people who have no other knowledge than the church traditions in which they have been raised. But to accomplish such a noble aim it is necessary to do personal work of evangelism among friends and acquaintances, and therefore this book could be used by Christians as a guide and a source of material in affirming the principles of New Testament Christianity. That's the reason for the title.

The main difficulty that Christians will experience in converting Catholics is due to the almost complete ignorance that they have of the Bible. Having been taught mechanically and exclusively by their priests on the doctrines of the Church, they find, especially in the beginning, an insurmountable obstacle to understand biblical teaching and, consequently, they should not be overwhelmed with too many subjects all at once. A slow and progressive discussion on individual problems will be helpful to all. For this reason it is suggestible not to lend this book indiscriminately to every Catholic without a previous preparation. Any work of evangelism can be successful only if it is done gradually or by steps. The brethren will find two types of Roman Catholics, the ones faithfully fanatic for their Church and the others indifferent for any church. With both types it is very difficult to deal; hence the necessity of prayer, prudence, and perseverance.

In the eventuality that some Roman Catholics shall read this book directly without the help of a Christian friend, I want to say to them that, in exposing the tenets of their Church, I have intended to fight against man-made institutions and not at all against them. As a former Roman Catholic priest I love them with the same love I had for them when I was ministering unto them. May the Lord Jesus Christ open their minds to the truth of the gospel and fill their hearts with love toward Him, for whose name and glory this book has been written.

ANICETO M. SPARACNA

West Collingswood, N. J.

September 1, 1955.

*Note from Charles Dailey. Many years ago I purchased this book for 10¢ from a sale table. A preacher was culling his library. When I became aware of the irenic and thorough nature of the text, I suggested to Don DeWelt that it needed to be reprinted. He renamed it to its present title and published it. He tried to locate the author and previous publisher, but they could not be found. The book has again been out of print for many years, so we are bringing it to the Internet where it can have world-wide impact.*

*In 2007 we received this most welcome note from Mike Hewlett: I casually knew Aniceto during the last few years of his life. He was a wonderful man. I have posted his obituary below for your information.*

*Aniceto M. Sparagna*

*Date of Notice: Saturday, January 10, 2004*

***Aniceto M. Sparagna, 90, of Tabernacle, passed away Thursday,***

**January 8, 2004 at home. Born in Minturno, Italy, he was a most devoted citizen of the United States. Aniceto resided in Tabernacle for 52 years. He was a minister of the Church of Christ in Collingswood, Hammonton & Waterford He is survived by his beloved wife of 52 years, Viola (nee Cutts) Sparagna; 1 nephew, Francesco Brunetti & family in Marino di Minturno, Italy. Relatives and friends may call on Monday, January 12, 2004 from 6-8 PM at the Mathis Funeral Home, 58 N. Main St., Medford (609) 654-2439. Funeral services will be held on Tuesday, January 13, 2004 at 10 AM at the Waterford Church of Christ, Pennington Ave., Waterford. Interment will follow in Junior Mechanics Cemetery, Tabernacle. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made in Aniceto's memory to the Waterford Church of Christ, c/o 162 Carranza Rd., Tabernacle, NJ 08088.**

*His home on Carranza Road in Tabernacle, NJ (23 miles SE of Philadelphia) was next door to the building for the Tabernacle congregation. His wife, Viola Cutts, was probably a 3rd generation resident of that area. Her ancestors were responsible for founding the Tabernacle congregation in 1914 -- believed to be the first congregation of the church in NJ. Many of her relatives still attend that congregation, including one of my dearest friends. I myself was a member there from 1984 through 1999, and it was during this time that I met Aniceto.*

## **INTRODUCTION NECESSITY OF EVANGELISM**

The Great Commission that Jesus Christ left to the disciples just before His ascension to heaven constitutes a tremendous responsibility for all the Christians in the world. Each one of us has received from Christ through the person of the apostles an important duty that cannot be omitted without endangering our own salvation. As the Lord puts it, the evangelization of all peoples is a duty of every Christian according to the knowledge and possibility that he possesses. Jesus commanded categorically: "Go ye, therefore, into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," Mark 16:15. These words are very clear and bind us without any exception. All of us ought to be preachers, evangelists, messengers of Christ among the people with whom we are dealing daily in every way. The Word of God must be spread all over the world in order to bring into the kingdom of Christ as many souls as we can. Christianity must be enlarged everywhere, but especially in our own country, town and family. Unfortunately, there are still very many people who do not know the gospel; we must try to convert them not only through our prayers and good example, which exhibit to them the power of the Word of God, but also by personal evangelism which is one of the most efficacious means of preaching. Because the early Christians insisted tenaciously in this

particular field they won the mighty empire of Rome for Christ. A similar task confronts us today; the task of winning the world for Christ. We must fulfill His command to "teach all nations" inflamed with a crusading zeal for souls.

However, in order to be successful in our evangelistic efforts, it is advisable to concentrate our energies to some definite fields, so that we may be very well prepared through a careful study of specialization. That is why the primary purpose of this booklet has been confined to a particular group of people who are following the traditions of men rather than the words of God. It has been prepared in order to help our Christian brethren in their missionary work among Roman Catholics, whose knowledge of the Bible is very lacking and, consequently, makes them one of the most difficult fields of evangelism ever experienced by any personal worker. Wherefore the necessity of presenting some important suggestions which could be very useful in converting those people about whom I can speak with personal experience, having been for twenty years in a Franciscan monastery and for eleven years a priest in good standing in the Church of Rome.

### **IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER**

The first thing that every Christian should never omit while engaged in personal evangelism is to pray earnestly unto God for conversions. It would be impossible for us to convert anyone without the active work of the Spirit. We might be able to convince some people intellectually, but never change their minds spiritually, making believers from unbelievers. This is the exclusive job of God, it being a philosophical principle that no one can give to others anything which he does not possess, as, for instance, the divine grace. Nature cannot produce supernature in the same way that the finite is unable to become infinite by its own virtue. Faith is a supernatural act which cannot be elicited independently from God. Rightly it can be defined: An act of the intellect assenting to a divine truth under the influence of the will which is moved by God through grace. In other words, faith comes as a gift from God and, although we receive it by hearing His words of life, nonetheless it is given to us in response to our

attitude of prayer. In the Old Testament there are many passages showing the necessity of divine help in order to obtain mercy and salvation. The Psalmist invokes: "O God, convert us; and show thy face, and we shall be saved." Ps. 79:20. In the New Testament Jesus said: "No one can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." John 6:44. And again: "For without me you can do nothing." John 15:5. Furthermore, Paul states that salvation is a gift "For by grace you are saved through faith: and that not of yourselves, for it is the gift of God." Eph. 2:8. And again in 2 Timothy 1:9: "Who (God) hath delivered us and called us by his holy calling, not according to our own works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the times of the world."

It is evident, therefore, that if we want to convert others, we must be a people of prayer, asking God with humility and steadfastness to open the door of His spiritual treasury in order to change the minds and move the hearts of the unbelievers. In 1 Cor. 3:6-7 Paul emphasized this thought in a very clear way when he wrote: "I have planted, Apollo watered: but God gave the increase. Therefore, neither he that planteth is any thing, nor he that watereth: but God that giveth the increase." Until this important spiritual fact is clearly understood by the brethren as well as by truth-seekers all our personal work of evangelism among Roman Catholics will prove of little, if any, avail. Hence the necessity of acknowledging the power of God in the spiritual task of converting people for Christ. "Therefore did I say to you that no man can come to me, unless it be given him by my Father." John 6:66.

## **FRIENDSHIP**

One of the wisest things to do with any person of different faith or belief is to build a warm friendship with him. It would be very impractical, if not impossible, to talk about religion with some one whom we had not met before. Canvassing from door to door or preaching at the corner of a city street, as many sectarians do, is not only embarrassing for the individuals engaged in such a work, but also troublesome for others. Besides, it would be foolish to expect positive results from that sort of evangelism. Friendship,

therefore, is the first step that we have to make when we begin our personal work among Roman Catholics. Thereafter we may introduce occasionally a religious subject without showing to do it purposely, unless we would be invited personally to discuss a religious matter. Catholics are extremely proud and jealous of their religious traditions and tenets and would resist any attempt to contradict them openly. On the other hand, they have an inferiority complex in this particular field due to their acknowledged ignorance of the Bible, and thus are afraid to engage themselves in any religious talk which could endanger their spiritual security. Therefore, we must not rush or challenge them in any way, but be patient and comprehensive of their repulsive attitude, showing a great love and an appreciative interest in their behalf.

Moreover, we must always remember to be kind and sweet as much as we can, trying to avoid any arguing in order to captivate the sympathy and confidence of our hearer. Losing our self-control in such a circumstance would mean a lost battle for our purposes. On the contrary, we ought to use the same charity of our Lord in dealing with people, helping them in every way according to our own possibilities. Jesus Christ took care of the material necessities of the multitudes before starting to convert their souls. The parable of the good Samaritan teaches us to love and help our neighbors regardless of the difference of age, race, language and religion. Only if based on such premises shall our personal evangelism among Roman Catholics be efficacious and successful with satisfaction for us and glory for God.

### **COMMON DOCTRINES**

Another important step of which we must be aware while discussing with Catholics is to examine in the beginning all the doctrines that are commonly accepted by both sides. Nothing, in fact, could be more helpful than to show a common ground of agreement from which to start later a discussion about the doubtful points that we intend to clarify in the light of the Bible. Catholics consider themselves to be Christians and are taught they belong to the only true church established by Jesus Christ on earth. Therefore, we must never think of them as if they were unbelievers

or pagans, because such an attitude would put between us and them an insurmountable obstacle. Instead, it would be a very good thing if we would be able to read or repeat to them the "Apostles' Creed" in which is contained, as in epitome, the fundamental doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church which are universally recognized as true. This creed, composed in the Eastern Church, was used by the early Christians as a formula of faith before receiving baptism, and still now is repeated by the Catholics almost every day as a prayer. In it we have a summary of doctrines, already contained in the Bible, and disposed in twelve articles in order to be easily memorized. It says: "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified; died and was buried; He descended into hell (hades); the third day He arose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy Catholic Church...." At this point you may stop, making the natural remark that in this creed there is not mentioned the Roman Catholic Church, but only the holy Catholic Church. It is clear that Romanism is a denominational church and not at all the universal church of Christ claimed by the Catholics. We also believe we belong to this holy Catholic Church, which was founded by Jesus Christ and established by the apostles on the day of Pentecost, showing properly that the exclusiveness of Romanism in this point is, therefore, a falsity. It may be emphasized here that the church of Christ can have but one name (Rom. 16:16) for the simple fact that once Christians we shall be always Christians without any other mark, distinction or denomination, as Paul wonderfully wrote to the Galatians 3:27: "For as many of you as have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for we are all one in Christ Jesus." And again in 1 Cor. 12:13: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free." Upon what basis then can the Roman Catholic Church affirm to be the only true church of

Jesus Christ when in its own symbol of faith the appellation of Roman is not there?

### **APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION**

Generally one of the main difficulties that hinders Catholics from leaving their church is the so-called historical argument based on the claim that the Roman Catholic Church is the continuation of the primitive church of Jerusalem. Through an unbroken line of popes and bishops, validly consecrated from the beginning till now, Catholic apologists strive to show that there has been no interruption in the apostolic succession of the Church of Rome, and consequently the Reformation first and the Restoration later are both considered as heretical movements. To demonstrate the absurdity of such a reasoning it is sufficient to know that since the first century many churches, although founded by the apostles, became notoriously heretical and this simply means that the apostolic succession cannot constitute a mark or test for the true church of Jesus Christ. In the New Testament we are taught that only the adherence to the words of God is a real sign of evidence for such a recognition. In Ephesians 4:4-6 Paul wrote: "For there is one body and one Spirit: as you are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all..." These are the true notes that are absolutely necessary in order to belong to the universal church of Christ. The apostolic succession is good to demonstrate the antiquity of some churches, but never the authenticity of a true church. For this reason, Paul, Peter, and John in their letters warned the early Christians to be watchful for many pseudo-prophets and false doctors, who were already at work in spreading heresies and errors among all the congregations of the saints. Besides, Paul writing to the Galatians 1:6-8 said: "I am astonished that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel. Which is not another: only there are some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach a gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema." It is clear that the great apostasy, which is still working in Christendom, was initiated

under the eyes of the apostles, and therefore it is simply childish and foolish to see in the apostolic succession the mark of the true church of Christ, as does the Roman Catholic Church. Moreover, we may add that if this principle would be good, the Greek Church, which by all means could claim the same succession, also should be recognized as the true church of Jesus Christ. Why then does the Church of Rome consider the Greek Church schismatic and heretic? This evident incongruity shows marvelously the fallacious conclusion substained by the Roman Catholic Church.

Nevertheless, we may vindicate historically and morally the veracity and authenticity of New Testament Christianity, following the principle that a true church must always be conformed to the Bible. Any innovation, alteration, or addition made on it is against the will of God and prepares the way to error and heresy. The apostles always commanded the church to be faithful to the words of God, to keep the commandments of the Lord, to avoid false doctrines and false doctors. Now, if there is a church that does not follow these apostolic dispositions, this church cannot be true; and this is precisely the case of the Roman Catholic Church which, following the traditions of men rather than the words of God, went far away from the truth. For this very reason there arose throughout the centuries many religious reformers asking for removal of the abuses and a return to the purity and simplicity of New Testament Christianity, using the Bible as the only mark of discrimination for a true church. The many dogmas and doctrines added by the Catholics to the Bible shows irrefutably that their church cannot be the true church of Jesus Christ as they claim, and therefore they have the moral duty to quit error for the sake of truth.

This is the right conclusion that we must reach while discussing with Catholics, whose stubbornness can be explained only by the prejudices of their long tradition. They are taught by the priests that outside of the Roman Catholic Church there is no salvation; we must assure them that we may have salvation only if we have adherence to the Bible. That is why it is necessary for them to read this holy book and discover for themselves the many contradictions between their church and the words of God. As we read in the second letter of John 1:9 the mark of true Christianity

rests on the doctrine of Christ: "Whosoever revolteth and continueth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God. He that continueth in the doctrine, the same hath both the Father and the Son." We do know that Catholics are living in the darkness of error, having the appearance of religion while in their heart they are worshipping creatures; it is our duty therefore to help them in finding the truth. Let us spread among them the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ discussing with them the fundamental doctrines of our faith in the light of the Scriptures. But, in doing so, we must always remember to use the Bible approved by the Roman Catholic authority, because otherwise Catholics would not listen to us, remaining with a strong suspicion that our Bible has been purposely revised. Their ignorance on the Scriptures constitutes generally the biggest handicap in discussion with them, and therefore we ought to use discretion and wisdom in order to avoid being accused of misleading them.

In the following chapters, where we shall expose in detail the main tenets of the Roman Catholic Church which are in contradiction with the Scriptures, we will use for reference the Rheims-Douay Version of the Bible, edited entire in 1610, and which was a direct translation of the Latin Vulgate authorized by the fathers of the Council of Trent. In this way, our Roman Catholic friends can be assured that there will be no misrepresentation of biblical doctrines in confuting the basic errors of their man-made church. What we ask of them is to discuss with us without any religious prejudice, searching the Scriptures with sincerity and broad-mindedness in order to rediscover there that revealed truth which too often men and centuries have concealed or obscured. The brethren of the churches of Christ are eager to help them in any way during their biblical investigations, hoping and praying that the saving power of Jesus Christ may penetrate into every soul for the highest glory of God and the enlargement of His kingdom on earth.

## **PART I**

### **Roman Catholic Sources of Authority**

It is supremely important, while discussing with Catholics, to

establish at the very beginning the religious authority with which they are willing to agree in order to prove the problems under investigation. Without a common basis of proof it would be almost impossible to carry on any kind of reasoning. However, it is not so easy to reach such an agreement with people who are instructed more in the church doctrines than in the Word of God. Hence, the necessity to examine first of all the Roman Catholic sources of authority and find out the norm or rule of faith that directs Catholics in their religious life. Through a fair criticism on the reliability of this rule our Catholic friends may understand the all-sufficiency of the Scriptures and, consequently, accept the Bible as the only fount of doctrine and practice for all Christians.

It is well known that the Roman Catholic Church believes in two sources of religious authority, namely Bible and Tradition. The former is considered to be the "written revelation" and is called also Scripture, while the latter constitutes the so-called "unwritten revelation" from which came into being throughout the centuries all the errors held by the Roman Church today. From a clear and fair examination of these two sources may depend our possibility of reaching Roman Catholics. In the following chapters we shall see what they really understand about the Bible and about Tradition, showing to them with scriptural and historical evidences the all-sufficiency of the Scriptures and therefore the necessity of abandoning their man-made doctrines for God's revealed truths.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **ROMAN CATHOLIC BELIEF AND USE OF THE BIBLE**

Unquestionably the belief in the divine authorship of the Bible is one of the foundation stones of Roman Catholicism. In every public or private teaching the Church of Rome has always appealed to the Bible as a source of revelation and, although claiming the exclusive-ness of its interpretation, has considered it as the most valuable argument in favor of religious or moral doctrines. The very fact that Tradition itself is said to be based on the Scriptures shows beyond a shade of doubt the primary importance in which the Bible has been placed by Romanists. It is not correct therefore to say that they disrepute the Bible or do not

recognize its divine authority. A charge such as this, besides being false, would dig up an insuperable abyss between their position and ours. They do believe that the Bible is the world's supreme book, that it is a library within a single cover and whose contents have no equal in human literature; that it contains the only authentic account of the origin of man and the material universe; that it records the most ancient history of mankind that it reveals God and his marvelous plan of salvation; that it uncovers the true issues of life and lifts up our hope in the certainty of a future and blissful destiny. Above all, they believe that the Bible is the true Word of God, who spoke first by the prophets, then by his Son, and lastly by the apostles (Hebr. 1:1-2). The Bible is indeed at the core of Roman Catholic worship.

However, depending in everything from the infallible authority of the Church, Catholics have no right to interpret the Bible as they please, nor can they use indifferently whatever text or scriptural comment. In the preface of the Douay Version is an express warning: "Bibles and biblical commentaries, to be lawful for Catholic readers, must bear the approval of a Bishop of the Church" (p. vi). The subject of the present chapter is precisely concerned with Roman Catholic belief and use of the Bible.

### **OFFICIAL TEACHING ABOUT THE BIBLE**

In the Baltimore Catechism, acknowledged by all as an incontestable authority on Catholic doctrines, the official teaching of the Church regarding the Bible is expressed as follows: "Sacred Scripture, or the Bible, is the Word of God written by men under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and contained in the books of the Old and New Testament.

"Inspiration is the act by which God moves and directs the sacred writers faithfully to commit to writing all those things and only those things that He wishes them to write. The sacred writers act as free instruments of God, who is the principal author of Sacred Scriptures."

Although the Roman Catholic Church teaches that the Holy Scripture is the Word of God, it does not support the idea of the verbal dictation of the Bible. Instead, it affirms that the Bible is

everywhere true in the sense intended by the individual sacred writer. (A Catholic Dictionary, p. 59)

In Radio Replies, Fathers Rumble and Carty offer us a very clear explanation of the Catholic position in such a matter, writing: "If, by verbal inspiration is meant a dictation of the very words to the writers by God, as one dictates to a stenographer, Catholics are not obliged to believe in verbal inspiration. But we are obliged to believe that every single word as it left the hands of the original writers was written under the inspiration of God, and infallibly expressed the truth intended by God... Not a word, nor a sentence, belonging to the original writings, could be excluded from the divine influence of God's inspiration. The whole of the Bible is for us the Word of God. We cannot regard the Bible as a mixture of God's Word and merely human thoughts or opinions." (Vol. III, p. 39)

### **JEROME'S VULGATE**

The Roman Catholic Bible corresponds approximately to our own Bible. It is nothing else than a different translation of the same Word of God. Jerome revised the New Testament and the Psalter of the Old Latin text "Itala Vetus" and translated directly from the Hebrew or Aramaic all other books with the exception of Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch and the two books of the Maccabees which he left untouched in the Old Latin version because he said that they were not canonical or inspired. The work of Jerome lasted from 383 to about 406 A. D., and was undertaken at the command of pope Damasus. The Council of Trent ordered the Vulgate to be recognized as "authentic (authoritative) in public readings, disputations, preachings and expositions." As such it is believed by Catholics to be in accordance substantially with the originals which were lost and consequently it does not contain any error about faith or morals. The Vulgate was later translated into English by exiled English priests and educators who printed the New Testament at Rheims in 1582, and the Old Testament at Douay in 1609-10, and for this reason is called "Rheims and Douay Version." Revised by Bishop Challoner in 1750, it has since remained the official Catholic Bible for English speaking people.

Generally speaking, there is not much difference between the King James version and the Roman Catholic translation of the Bible. In fact, as far as the New Testament is concerned both have exactly 27 books, while there is some difference about the Old Testament, the Roman Catholics having 46 books instead of 39 as there should be.<sup>1</sup>

(1) For the benefit of those who have no acquaintance with the Roman Catholic version of the Bible we list here the 46 books with their names, indicating in brackets the proper name used in our Bible. Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Josue (Joshua), Judges, Ruth, four books of Kings (1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings), 1 and 2 Paralipomenon (1 and 2 Chronicles), 1 and 2 Esdras (Ezra, Nehemiah), Tobias, Judith, Ester, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Canticle of Canticles (Song of Solomon), Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Isaias (Isaiah), Jeremias (Jeremiah), Lamentations, Baruch, Ezechiel (Ezekiel), Daniel, Osee (Hosea), Joel, Amos, Abdias (Obadiah), Jonas (Jonah), Micheas (Micah), Nahum, Habacuc (Habakkuk), Sophonias (Zephaniah), Aggeus (Haggai), Zacharias (Zechariah), Malachias (Malachi), 1 and 2 Machabees. New Testament: The Gospels of SS. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles of Saint Paul to the Romans, Corinthians (2), Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians (2), Timothy (2), Titus, Philemon, and Hebrews; the Epistles of SS. James, Peter (2), John (3) and Jude, the Apocalypse of St. John (Revelation). (A Catholic Dictionary, p. 59)

## APOCRYPHAL BOOKS

The name apocryphal (hidden) was used by early ecclesiastical writers to describe secret or mysterious matters, things of unknown origin, forged or spurious. It also means unrecognized, uncanonical in reference to those books of the Old Testament whose place in the canon was not admitted by the Jewish Church who considered them uninspired. The Apocryphal books were produced between about 250 B. C. and somewhere in the early Christian centuries. They are not found in the Hebrew canon; they are never quoted by Jesus; and it cannot with certainty be affirmed that the apostles ever directly allude to them. The early churches permitted them to be read for edification, and recommended them to the catechumens for study, but rejected them from the canon. On the contrary, the Council of Trent at its sitting on April 8, 1546, declared the following apocryphal books to be canonical or inspired and containing the rule of faith and morals revealed by God: Tobias, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, 1 and 2 Machabees, with additions to the books of Esther (ver. 4 of chap. X to XVI) and Daniel (ver. 24 of chap. III to ver. 3 of chap. IV and chaps. XIII and XIV). The Council pronounced an anathema against anyone who ventured to differ from it in opinion. This has since regulated the belief of the Roman Catholic Church. (The Westminster Dictionary of the Bible, p. 33)

The reason Romanists have accepted those apocryphal books as authentic and inspired is because they wanted to defend some fantastic doctrines which cannot be found in the canonical books of the Bible. For instance, in 2 Maccabees 12:43-46 there is insinuated the idea that is good and holy to pray for the dead and that the prayers of the living may shorten the pains of the departed, a thing totally unknown in the Sacred Scriptures. In 2 Maccabees 15:12 is narrated a dream or vision, in which Jeremiah, long dead, is pictured as praying for the people of the holy city and helping them. This is quoted by the Roman Catholics as authority for invoking the dead to intercede for them, thus giving ground to the doctrine of the mediation of the saints and Mary. Likewise, in the book of Tobias 6:1-8 an angel of God is represented as directing

him in the practice of incantations and augury. This fact has brought Romanists to the institution of the feast of Saint Raphael, Archangel, and to the belief in the ceaseless ministry of the angels in behalf of men. No such extravagant notions are to be found in the canonical books in which magical incantations have been forbidden and condemned (Lev. 19:26; Deut. 18:10-14).

Besides, in the book of Judith we have a narrative full of inconsistencies, mis-statements, anachronisms, and geographical absurdities which make the story at a complete variance with the inspired records, and therefore it is doubtful if there is in it any truth at all. In general, all the apocryphal books show human authorship, uncertainty of language, variation of facts, disclaim of inspiration. Wherefore, it can be said in all truth that the Apocrypha found in the Douay version are spurious and uninspired and cannot be called "Deuterocanonical books" as if they were included in the canon in a second time. The internal evidences marked by an absolute absence of prophetic teaching or divine revelation and church history are against a similar hypothesis. (The Bible vs. Romanism, by A. N. Trice, p. 44)

### **IS THE CHURCH BEFORE THE BIBLE?**

It is a general belief of the Roman Catholics that their has given us the Bible, making an unreasonable distinction between the priority of the Church and the time in which the Bible was written down. In other words, to them the Bible comes next and follows the Church, claiming that she not only existed before the Bible, but was the mother of it. In fact, Father John O'Brien, in *The Faith of Millions*, after demonstrating that Christ wrote nothing and did not command the apostles to write anything, states that the Church "is not the child of the Bible, as many non-Catholics imagine, but its mother. She derives neither her existence nor her teaching authority from the New Testament. She had both before the New Testament was born: she secured her being, her teachings, her authority directly from Jesus Christ." (p. 146)

Nothing could be further from the truth. We know that God is the same author of the Church and of the Bible, and therefore there cannot be priority or distinction between that divine institution and

the Word of God contained in the Scriptures. In the first dispensation, from Adam to Moses, there was an embryonal church based on the primitive revelation transmitted from mouth to mouth; in the second dispensation, from Moses to Christ, the church was nothing else than the written revelation in the third and final dispensation, from Christ to now and till the end of the world, the church is the spiritual body of Jesus, firmly and permanently established by the apostles with divine right upon the words that they heard from him. In fact, in Matthew 28: 18-20 we read: "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Going therefore, teach ye all nations...teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." During the apostolic age the New Testament, orally preached in the beginning under the assistance of the Holy Ghost, was later completely written by inspired men in Greek, except perhaps for the gospel of Matthew written in Aramaic, and for three hundred years even the Church of Rome used that book and that language. In fact, the most noted and ancient manuscripts in our possession (as Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus and Vaticanus) are written in Greek and have been found within the boundaries of the Eastern Church. To these may be added many other Greek Bibles and versions in Syriac (150 A. D.), Egyptian (second cent.), Ethiopic (4th cent.), Armenian (4th cent.) and Gothic (4th cent.) Therefore, the Roman affirmation that we have received the Bible through that Church is a falsification of facts without any serious and reasonable basis. Long before the Church of Rome was organized the Bible was in existence and preserved throughout the centuries in the Greek language and in other versions. Romanists can claim only the Latin Vulgate and the preservation of that faulty translation. The authority of the Bible is above any church and transcends all traditions which, as in the case of the Roman Catholic Church, have distorted or changed the simple and divine meaning of the Scriptures.

### **VALUE OF THE BIBLE IN CATHOLIC HANDS**

Although Roman Catholics believe that the Bible is inspired and contains the revelation of God unto men, nonetheless its religious authority is conditioned to the restrictive dispositions

imposed by their Church. Objectively considered the Bible is for them nothing more than a "dead book" whose spiritual value does not surpass the intellectual influence which can be exercised by any literary book. In order that it might become a source of truth and faith the Bible must not be separated from the Church. For this reason Catholics have no right to interpret it by them-selves, neither read it without ecclesiastical approval. The Church, and the Church alone has the power to define its canonicity, inspiration and interpretation. Here is how Rev. W. H. Anderson in a tract entitled "What is the Bible?" explains the position of the Roman Church concerning the Scripture:

"Because it never was a Bible, till the infallible Church pronounced it to be so. The separate treatises, each of them inspired, were lying, as it were dispersedly; easily to confound with others, that were uninspired. The Church gathered them up, selected them, pronounced judgment on; rejecting some, which she defined and declared not be canonical because not inspired; adopting others as inspired, and therefore canonical." (p. 6)

Cardinal Gibbons, in *The Faith of Our Fathers*, writes: "The canonicity of the Holy Scriptures rests solely on the authority of the Catholic Church." (p. 249) And Father Conway, in his "Question Box" states: "It is only by the divine authority of the Catholic Church that Christians know that the Scripture is the Word of God, and what books certainly belong to the Bible." (p. 46) Finally, Cardinal Gibbons expounds in its simplest form the true standing of the Romanists on this matter as follows:

"The Church is the only divinely constituted teacher of Revelation. Now, the Scripture is the great depository of the Word of God. Therefore, the Church is the divinely appointed Custodian and Interpreter of the Bible. For, her office of infallible Guide were superfluous if each individual could interpret the Bible for himself.... God never intended the Bible to be the Christian's rule of faith independently of the living authority of the Church." (*Faith of Our Fathers*, p. 77)

Many similar statements could be quoted, but the above are sufficient to demonstrate the kind of authority the Bible has in Roman Catholic hands. It is not surprising at all to know that this

divine book has been considered spiritually useless by Romanists whose chief means of salvation is centered in the priestly ministry. According to them the Church may exist and save without the Bible, while the Bible cannot exist and save without the Church. And yet they proclaim it to be the true Word of God revealed unto the world, pretending to support all their doctrines with Scripture references. Is not this that kind of absurd reasoning which is purposely made in order to confound the minds of the simple people and in which the Roman Catholic Church has proved to be incomparable master and teacher?

### **BIBLE READING AMONG CATHOLICS**

Apparently, it may seem that the Roman Catholics have been encouraged by their hierarchy in the reading of the Bible. In fact, Father Conway, in his "Question Box" affirms explicitly that "Catholics are not forbidden but encouraged to read the Bible. However, the Catholic Church, as the guardian and interpreter of the Scriptures, must needs prevent her people from being led astray by false translations of the Bible, which are often accompanied by glosses and notes destructive to the Catholic faith. But she never has prohibited versions in vernacular which have been approved by the Bishops of the various countries, and have been edited with explanatory notes by Catholic scholars." (pp. 83-84)

From the above statement it is clear that Romanists are not free to read any version of the Bible, it being a mortal sin to even possess a non-Catholic Bible; and that, if they read an approved Bible, it must be edited with explanatory notes by Catholic scholars. Naturally, with such limitations Catholics are hindered to make any scientific research or inquiry by themselves and, consequently, they can never know the truth.

Pope Leo XIII, in his encyclical on the Bible (1893), wrote: "By reading the Scriptures the intelligence will be illuminated and strengthened...and at the same time the heart will grow warm and will strive with ardent longing to advance in virtue and divine love." He also granted 300 days of indulgence to the faithful who spend at least a quarter of hour daily for thirty days in reading the Holy Scripture.

The present pope, Pius XII, has said: "We firmly hope that in the future reverence for, as well as the use and knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures will everywhere more and more increase for the good of souls."

Nevertheless, in spite of all these favorable expressions, it is a fact that the Roman Catholic Church has been always opposed to the reading of the Bible down through the ages. In 1229 A. D., for instance, the Bible was forbidden to the "laity" by the Council of Toulouse with the following decree: "We forbid also the permitting of the laity to have the books of the Old and New Testament, unless any should wish, from a feeling of devotion, to have a psalter or breviary for divine service. But we must strictly forbid them to have the above-mentioned books in the vulgar tongue." (History of the Councils, vol. ii, part I, col. 425)

Furthermore, the Council of Trent (Canons 9 to 14) stooped so low as to anathematize (curse) all those who believe in the private interpretation of the Bible. The same Council exalted tradition above the Bible in such a way that without the help of tradition the Scriptures are not better than a piece of pagan literature. The conclusion is that the divine Revelation has been completely supplanted by the so-called "living voice of the Church," so that practically Roman Catholics have no need of the Bible which is considered to be a private property of the clergy.

Again, pope Pius VIII, in 1829, denounced the circulation of the Bible in vernacular tongue as a "crafty device" and "a nefarious scheme threatening everlasting ruin." Pope Leo XII (Ubi Primas, 1824) described Protestant Bible Societies as "strutting with effrontery through the world." Pope Gregory XVI was particularly severe in condemning the Protestant Bible Societies in his encyclical *Inter Praecipuas*, published in the year 1844, where he said:

"Among the chief machinations by which in our times of their faith, a prominent place is held by the Bible societies. These societies, first instituted in England and since extended far and wide, we now behold in battle array, conspiring to translate the

books of divine Scripture into all the popular languages, to issue immense number of copies, to spread them indiscriminately among Christians and heathen, and to entice every individual to read them without any guidance.

"Having, therefore, taken into consultation several cardinals of the Holy Roman Church...we again condemn with our Apostolic authority all Bible Societies censored by our predecessors... Be it known that all that lend their names or their help to such societies will be of a grave crime before God and Church. Moreover, confirm and by our Apostolic authority renew the commands already given against the publication, distribution, reading and keeping of Scripture translated into the vernacular... At the same time it will be our duty to snatch out of the hands of the faithful all Bibles translated into people's language."

Continuing the policy of his predecessors, pope Pius IX (Qui Pluribus, 1864) considered as "an old device of heretics" the giving of the Bible to the people translated in their own tongues. (Converted Catholic Novem., 1951)

These are the authoritative testimonies of the Roman Catholic Church on the reading of the Bible. Can it be said that the opposition of the Romanists to the use of the Bible is a misrepresentation and misunderstanding of ignorant non-Catholic people?

### **POINTS OF AGREEMENT AND DISAGREEMENT**

We heartily agree with Roman Catholics that the Bible is the Word of God, that it is inspired, and that it is the basis for the Christian way of life. But we cannot agree with them in the acceptance of the Church as the infallible interpreter of the Bible, especially when for church is meant the Pope. Christians reject this position both on historical grounds and on the basis of personal experience. They believe that the New Testament preceded and paved the way for what we know today as the Church of Christ. Although orally transmitted in the beginning, the truth of the gospel was secured by the inspiration and infallibility of the living voice of the Apostles in matters of faith and morals. Later they wrote personally or through other disciples what they had formerly

preached in many places in order to preserve in its purity and simplicity the divine message of Christ for the future Christian generations. If it had not been for the letters of Paul, the Gospels, and the book of Revelation, there might have been no Church at all, since a variety of churches were held together by the inspiration and admonitions of the various letters and messages. (Primer on Roman Catholicism, by Stanley Stuber, p. 115)

On the basis of personal experience, Christians understand that the "Gospel...is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth... For the justice of God is revealed therein, from faith unto faith." Rom. 1:16-17. Christians, therefore, have no need of an official interpreter. The Word of God speaks by itself directly unto them from the marvelous pages of the Bible. In the same way that the New Testament books were written in the popular language in order to meet the spiritual needs of the early Christians, so they should be reverently received and earnestly studied today. The Bible is the revelation of God unto men and contains a great fountain of spiritual power. From it all believers may receive light, grace, courage, comfort, peace and salvation. Independently from all priests and churches they see in it the radiating Spirit of Christ, calling all men unto him through the simple but fascinating words of the Scripture.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **PLACE OF TRADITION IN THE ROMAN CHURCH**

Since the Roman Catholic Church is built mostly on Tradition, it is necessary to explain the meaning and doctrine of it in such a way that our Catholic friends may understand the reasonableness of our irreconcilable position against this so-called second source of truth and faith. As we have seen in the preceding chapter, Romanists do not believe in the Bible as the only guide or rule of faith and morals. They are convinced of the idea that the Scripture does not contain the full revelation of God, and therefore they add to it an alleged Tradition which is believed to have been committed unto the Church as another means of religious authority. Father Conway, in his Question Box, p. 53, puts it in this way: "The origin

of our faith is not the Bible alone, but the Church which gives us both the written and unwritten word." In a certain sense, Catholics claim that Tradition is more important than the Bible itself, because it is said to be prior, larger and more useful and necessary than the written Word of God. According to Cardinal Newman, "Tradition is partly the interpretation, partly the supplement of Scripture." (Lectures on Romanism, p. 329) And Cardinal Bellarmine states: "We assert that the whole doctrine concerning faith or manners is not contained explicitly in the Scriptures; and that consequently beyond the Word of God, is required also the unwritten Word of God, that is, the Divine and Apostolic Traditions." (De Verbo Dei, vol. iv, chap. 3)

### **TRADITION ABOVE SCRIPTURE**

It is interesting to know that many Roman Catholic theologians, with the purpose of defending their mother Church in everything, have exalted Tradition above the Scripture in a manner that they have gone far beyond the definition of the Council of Trent, in which Tradition was placed on equal basis with the Scripture. Let us examine a few examples:

In his Outlines of Dogmatic Theology the Jesuit, Father Hunter, says: "The Church could dispense with Holy Scriptures, but cannot dispense with Tradition — Tradition is of a wider scope and more necessary." (Vol. 1, pp. 153-155)

Father DuBois affirms: "Today we (Roman Catholics) live one-tenth on the Bible, and nine-tenths on Tradition. The Bible perhaps does not contain all essential truths. Tradition is greater than the word of the Bible." (O Biblismi, Para, 1921, p. 96)

Finally, the Rev. Dr. Shanz, in his Christian Apology, writes: "The truth of Holy Scripture cannot be erected into norma of interpretation, except through the instrumentality of Tradition. Tradition is the well-spring and head. With it rests the decision. It alone can sit the faith and keep it firm. For this task Scripture is incompetent." (Vol. iii, p. 368)

With such statements Romanists have reached an opposite side from us concerning the rule of faith and morals. While we believe in the Bible alone, they stand for Tradition alone. What a change!

## **MEANING OF TRADITION**

Tradition comes from two Latin words: trans, over, and dare, to give, and means a giving-up, a delivery; an instruction by word of mouth; an oral transmission of information, beliefs, or customs from ancestors to posterity without written records. Theologically, the term is used for the sum of revealed truths which have not been committed to Sacred Scripture, but handed down by a series of legitimate pastors of the Church from age to age. The Baltimore Catechism defines Tradition in this way: "Tradition is the unwritten Word of God—that body of truths revealed by God to the Apostles, and not committed by them to writing, but handed down by word of mouth. These truths, which were later committed to writing, particularly by the Fathers of the Church, have been preserved and handed down to the present day."

The above definition is in accordance with the Council of Trent which, in 1546, declared in a special session (the 4th) that Tradition should be regarded as divine authority on equal basis with the Scripture:

"The sacred and holy, ecumenical and general Synod of Trent, lawfully assembled in the Holy Ghost...keeping this always in view, that errors being removed, the purity itself of the gospel be preserved in the Church; which (gospel) afore promised through the prophets in the Holy Scriptures, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, first promulgated with His own mouth, and then commanded to be preached by His apostles to every creature, as the fountain of all, both saving truth, and moral discipline; and seeing clearly that this truth and discipline as contained in the written books, and in the unwritten traditions, which, received by the Apostles from the mouth of Christ Himself, or from the Apostles themselves, the Holy Ghost dictating, have come down even to us, transmitted, as it were, from hand to hand; the Synod following the example of the orthodox fathers, receives and venerates with equal pious affection and reverence all the books both of the Old and New Testaments—seeing that one God is the author of both—as also the said Traditions, as well those appertaining to faith as to morals, as having been dictated, whether

by Christ's own word of mouth, or by the Holy Ghost, and preserved in the Catholic Church by continuous succession."

Likewise, the Catechism of the same Council declares: "The whole of doctrine to be delivered to the faithful, is contained in the Word of God, which is distributed into Scripture and Tradition." (Catech. Trid., Preface xii)

However, the doctrine of Tradition being fundamental to the Catholic belief, Romanists have felt the necessity to support this dogma with many references from the Scripture and Christian Antiquity.

### **TESTIMONY OF THE SCRIPTURE**

First of all, Catholics appeal to the Patriarchal dispensation, from Adam to Moses, in which the unwritten revelation was transmitted from parents to children by means of oral tradition. But, even when the revealed truths were written down by Moses, according to them, there remained many oral traditions mentioned in the Old Testament as, for instance, we may read in Deut. 32:7: "Remember the days of old: think upon every generation. Ask thy father, and he will declare to thee; thy elders and they will tell thee." And in Ps. 43:2 (44:1): "We have heard, O God, with our ears: our fathers have declared to us, the work thou hast wrought in their days, and in the days of old."

From these and other passages Catholics deduce that in the Old Testament time people were told to follow certain traditions besides the written Word of God, and, therefore, Tradition must be considered as an independent source of truth and faith. Needless to say that such an assumption is simply foolish for the following reasons: (1) We are living under the New Testament and have nothing to do with the Old Covenant provisions; (2) the quoted passages do not support at all the Tradition held by Romanists. They have been completely misinterpreted, being nothing else than a recollection of the benefits of God in behalf of his chosen people, which the parents recounted to their children who were told by the inspired writers to ask for this recounting. What parents and elders said on those occasions was already a matter of holy records, and not a Tradition separated from the Scripture.

Concerning the New Testament, Roman Catholics do not show any better understanding nor offer any valuable proof in demonstrating their thesis that Tradition was used as an independent source of revelation either by Jesus or the apostles. They repeat the same story that Christ neither wrote nor commanded his disciples to write anything about the truths that He announced. In this sense, they quote Matt. 10:7: "And going, preach, saying: The kingdom of heaven is at hand." And again Matt. 28:19-20: "Going, therefore, teach ye all nations...teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Luke 10:16: "He that heareth you heareth me." So, Christ, according to Romanists, commanded to teach, to preach, but not to write.

Besides, in the letters of Paul there are many expressions which Catholics produce as a demonstration that the oral Tradition should be accepted as the true Word of God independently from the Scripture. In this way they interpret the following passages: 1 Thess. 2:13: "Because, that when you have received of us the word of the hearing of God, you received it not as the word of men, but (as it is indeed) the word of God." 2 Thess. 2:14 (15): "Hold the traditions which you have learned, whether by word or by our epistle." Rom. 10:17: "Faith then cometh by hearing: and hearing by the word of God." 2 Tim. 1:13: "Hold the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me." 2 Tim. 2:2: "And the things which thou hast heard of me by many witnesses, the same commend to faithful men who shall be fit to teach others also." So, Catholics conclude that the oral traditions have equal value and authority with the Bible, a deduction which is completely out of place because no one has ever doubted the inspiration of the apostolic teachings. What we deny and oppose is that the related passages may be used in proving that kind of Tradition, imposed by the Roman Church in order to support its man-made doctrines.

We wonder sometimes how it is possible that people who are supposed to be intelligent and learned in all things may employ such a childish reasoning in proving their tenets. Jesus Christ, even according to Romanists, was God and embodied the divine revelation he was announcing to the people in his teaching, and

therefore he had no need at all to write nor to command to write. Nevertheless, in so doing, he did not commit his message to a precarious Tradition or uninspired men. He recognized the importance and exclusive authority of the Scriptures in such a way that on every occasion he appealed to it, condemning with unequivocal terms the foolish traditions of the scribes and Pharisees. To Satan, who tempted him, he answered three times pointing directly to the words of the Scripture: "It is written." Matt. 4:1-10. In the sermon of the mountain he recalled before the multitude the law and the prophets with words that Romanists themselves could use in supporting their doctrine of Tradition: "You have heard that it was said to them of old." Matt. 5:27. Jesus here does not mention writing or reading, and yet he was quoting passages from the written records.

The same thing can be said about the apostles in general and the expressions of Paul in particular. Jesus Christ entrusted all his power and authority (Matt. 28:18) to the apostles unto whom was promised the Holy Spirit in order to give them inspiration and inerrancy in matters of salvation. What they said was therefore a revelation of God which they proclaimed unto the world during their lifetime. They had no need to write because they represented the New Testament by means of inspiration. In the beginning they only preached the word, but, realizing that some day they had to die, before their departure from the earth each wrote down, or commanded some disciples to do so, all the things necessary for our salvation and Christian betterment. With their death the age of revelation was closed and all traditions which were not in accordance with the written records were considered spurious and consequently refused. Upon which Scriptures therefore can the Roman Catholic Church substantiate the doctrine of Tradition?

### **TESTIMONY OF CHRISTIAN ANTIQUITY**

For Christian Antiquity Roman Catholics understand the body of traditions preserved in the following monuments: (1) History of the Roman Church; (2) the Liturgies and Rituals of the Roman Church; (3) Archeology concerning the relics of the early Christian art and customs; (4) Definitions of doctrines, and anathemas

passed against errors; (5) the Writings of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church.

According to Romanists all these monuments contain that true divine Tradition which the Council of Trent promoted as having equal authority with the Bible and which was later placed above the Scriptures by the official teaching of the Church. Especially in the writings of the Fathers and Doctors, they say, there can be found statements supporting Tradition as an infallible source of revelation independent from the Bible. Among the apostolic Fathers they quote Ignatius Martyr and Polycarp who both taught the following of the traditions of the apostles as a criterion for avoiding heresies and errors. Particularly Polycarp, disciple of the apostle John, writing to the Philippians, said: "You must come back to the doctrine which was transmitted to us from the beginning by the Apostles, refusing all errors and false teachings." (chap. 7) Testifying of him, Eusebius declares that Polycarp taught only what he learned from the mouth of the blessed apostles and that which the true Church holds everywhere. (*Historia Eccles.*, book iv, chap. 14)

In the second century Irenaeus asserted that everyone should receive without discussion the old traditions preserved in the churches of Christ. In this sense, in his book, *Against Heresies*, he wrote that the only way to be in unity with the Church is to be in accordance with the traditions which were transmitted by the apostles to their disciples and preserved by the elders of the various churches to the present time. Such traditions can be found, he said, in all Christian churches and especially in those established or taught personally by the apostles. (Vol. 13, chap. 2-4)

From the third century on, Romanists say, the doctrine of Tradition was taught clearly and firmly by all Fathers and particularly by Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Basil, Chrysostom, Cyprian, Augustine, Jerome, Ambrose and others.

However, against the argument of Christian Antiquity it is very easy to demonstrate that the Fathers of the Church frequently refer to the gospel as that "that comes down from the apostles, which has been kept as a sacred deposit in the churches of the

apostles." Apostolic traditions and gospel was used indifferently by the early Fathers to mean the one and the same deposit of divine revelation, namely the New Testament. Certainly they had not the remotest idea to support the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Tradition as defined in the Council of Trent. They were concerned with defending and preserving the New Testament in its purity and considered it indiscriminately as apostolic tradition in the same sense that Paul employs the expression in 2 Thess. 2:14 (15): "Hold the traditions which you have learned, whether by word or by our epistle." It was a generic term indicating both oral and written teaching. From the word of Paul it is not possible to understand that different instructions were given in the two methods. Coming from an inspired preacher both Tradition and Epistle had to be accepted as a whole with the same reverence and authority. Even Romanists are forced to recognize this. In fact, Dr. Schanz, the same that in his Christian Apology exalts Tradition above the Bible, freely admits: "The very Fathers who, in some passages, mention Scripture alone as God's word, elsewhere speak of Tradition in similar terms. They looked upon the two as inseparable, and as giving expression to the same divine truth that was preached from the beginning." (p. 388)

There are only two or three passages in the Fathers where Tradition is aligned with Scripture as an independent source, but in each case it is made unmistakably evident that the independent authority of Tradition concerns matters of discipline and practice, not matters of faith. (G. L. Prestige, *Tradition in Theology*, July, 1926) The Fathers certainly affirm everywhere that nothing can be orthodox which is not scriptural, and therefore when they speak about Tradition they mean not the oral but the written revelation of God contained in the New Testament.

## **ROMANISTS CHANGED THE MEANING OF TRADITION**

The fundamental marks attached to the old meaning of Tradition were exposed successfully in the little book— *The Commonitorium of Vincent of Lerins* (5th cent.) — which became in the West the classical work on the doctrinal authority of the

Church. What the faithful son of the Church is to ask for, is the faith which has been held in the great Church, "everywhere, always, and by all"— "everywhere" by contrast to what can show local prevalence; "always" by contrast to what is novel; "by all" in contrast to what is merely the opinion of an individual, however great. It is a fact that there is nothing of importance, nothing which concerns the faith of an ordinary Christian, which can be shown to have been always in the Tradition and which is not also implied in the New Testament. (Reconstruction of Belief, by Gore, part iii, p. 900)

The above—which indisputably represents the unanimous mind of the Fathers—is a very conservative position. It gives a very restrictive meaning to the authority of the Church. However, the time came when the authoritarian spirit of the Roman Church chafed against such a restriction. In fact, it found itself committed to Medieval doctrines which had not much support in Antiquity, and none in Scripture. So the Council of Trent sanctioned the idea of Tradition as an independent fount of doctrine besides Scripture. And whereas the idea of Tradition suggests researches into the past and the verifying and correcting of the present by the past, this restraint also upon the authority of the living voice came to be viewed with jealousy or openly repudiated. The present living voice of the Church is enough; and the Church has been given in the successor of Peter a centre and seat of final authority. Thus we find recent Roman authorities on history (Franzelin and Batiflol) refusing any longer to accept Vincent of Lerins' rule, because the facts of history make it impossible to maintain (what still remains the official claim) that the present teaching of the Roman Church is covered by the appeal to antiquity—by the *quod semper* (always) and the *quod ubique* (everywhere). Thus the idea of the authority of the Church has been centralized, freed from limitations, and rendered peremptory and absolute in the Latin tradition. (Commentary on Holy Scripture, by Gore, Goudge and Guillaume, pp. 16-17)

## **THE ORGANS OF TRADITION**

The Roman Church calls organs of Tradition the various

voices by which the Catholic faith is expressed, namely pope, bishops and, in a certain sense, the faithful.

(1) The pope, who is infallible when he defines *ex cathedra* (from the chair) a truth concerning faith or morals to be held by the whole Church.

(2) Bishops, who enjoy the same privilege of infallibility when, under the Roman Pontiff, alone or united in council, they unanimously propose a certain doctrine to be believed by all.

(3) The faithful, who also may enjoy the privilege of infallibility when, united with their legitimate pastors (priests, bishops and pope), they almost unanimously believe some doctrine or practice as a *de fide* (of faith) matter. (Synopsis Theologiae Dogmaticae, Tanqueray, vol. 1, p. 645)

The organs of Tradition constitute the so-called Magisterium of the Church which is defined as follows: "The Church's divinely appointed authority to teach the truth of religion, 'Going therefore, teach all nations...teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.'" Matt. 28:19-20. This teaching is considered infallible because of the promise of Jesus: "And behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." (ibid.)

The Magisterium (from Latin *magister*, a master) is solemn and ordinary. The solemn Magisterium is that which is exercised only rarely by formal and authentic definitions of councils or popes. Its matter comprises dogmatic definitions of ecumenical councils or of the popes teaching *ex cathedra*, or of particular councils, if their decrees are universally accepted or approved in solemn form by the pope; also creeds and professions of faith put forward or solemnly approved by pope or ecumenical councils. The ordinary Magisterium is continually exercised by the Church, especially in her universal practices connected with faith and morals, in the unanimous consent of the Fathers and theologians, in the decisions of Roman Congregations concerning faith and morals, and various historical documents, in which the faith is declared. (A Catholic Dictionary, p. 319)

## CATHOLIC MEANING OF DOGMA

When speaking about dogma Romanists do not accept the vulgar notion of it, as an arbitrary doctrine imposed and commanded to be believed. What they really mean by dogma is a truth directly proposed by the Church for belief as an article of divine revelation. Originally, it was an opinion or proposition put as a positive assertion, its truth being supposed to have been previously shown. Usually Catholics take a great care in stating that the content of a dogma is truth revealed by God and therefore must be believed; it is not found in the assumption that it is true because many believe it, they say. The Church, according to them, in defining a doctrine, which must be believed and accepted by the faithful as a revelation of God, does not create a new teaching, but merely clarifies what is already contained in the Scripture and implicitly believed, although not fully understood. In this way, Fathers Rumble and Carty explain the two dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and Infallibility of the Pope: "Both doctrines were believed in so far as Catholics believed in the revelation I given by Christ, which contained these doctrines implicitly. I When the Church defined them she merely made explicit and of faith what had been hitherto implicit. She gave, not a new truth, but merely made these matters clear by defining these doctrines to be part of the revelation brought to us by Christ." (Radio Replies, vol. 1, p. 93)

Despite the more or less reasonable explanations made by the Roman Church in expounding the true meaning of the dogma, it is a fact that there is no scriptural authority supporting the Catholic custom of defining new dogmas. On the contrary, all the truths contained in the Bible are clear enough to be understood and followed without any further definition of the Church. All believers may easily find in it the fundamentals of Christianity by themselves, because the holy writers taught them with a simplicity and a clearness not to be found in any human book. God has fully revealed his will once and for all through Jesus Christ and his apostles, and to expect definitions of new dogmas today would mean a lack of faith in the completeness of the Scriptures, a thing which has led Romanists to accept Tradition as a primary source

and rule of faith and morals.

Besides, the Roman Catholic doctrine on dogma has been so far in contradiction with the practice of the Church. In fact, in the definition of many dogmas, especially the last one about the bodily assumption of Mary into heaven, there was neither Scripture nor early Tradition supporting those so-called implicit beliefs, and yet the Church defined them as revealed truths to be believed as matter of faith. For this very reason we may say that the faith of Catholics has not yet been stabilized, but is always subject to fluctuations and increases thus destroying that sense of firmness and assurancy that should be the most important mark of any rule of faith.

### **BIBLE AND FATHERS AGAINST TRADITION**

The best criticism of the Roman Catholic doctrine or dogma of Tradition is to be found in the Bible and in the very writings of the Church Fathers claimed by Romanists as advocating their own belief in it. A fair glance at the gospels brings us to the conclusion that Jesus Christ has always been an irreconcilable enemy of man-made traditions. Reproaching scribes and Pharisees he made statements such as these: "Why do you transgress the commandments of God for your tradition? — And you have made the commandments of God for your tradition. — And in vain do they worship me, teaching doctrines and commandments of men." Matt. 15:3-9. In order to be always in accordance with the Word of God, it is necessary to not introduce innovations or changes of any kind, but to be faithful to the commandments of God. Again Jesus said: "For leaving the commandments of God, you hold the tradition of men." Mark 7:8. The complaint of Christ is justified by the fact that tradition cannot go along with the Scripture, as he explains in Mark 7:13: "Making void the word of God by your own tradition, which you have given forth." Could Jesus Christ be more explicit in condemning the Roman Catholic doctrine on Tradition?

Likewise, the apostles, following the example of the Lord, warned Christians of the danger of Tradition. Paul admonished firmly the disciples at Corinth not to go "above that which is written." 1 Cor. 4:6. To the Colossians 2:8 he wrote to be watchful

against the impostures of the I philosophers and the Jewish traditions that would withdraw them from Christ: "Beware lest any man cheat you by philosophy and vain deceit; according to the tradition of men...and not according to Christ." Again the apostle affirmed that before his conversion he was "more abundantly zealous for the traditions of my fathers," (Gal. 1:14) but that after his conversion all such things he "counted as loss for Christ." Phil. 3:7. Also Peter spoke against Tradition when he wrote that men are redeemed not by the "vain conversation of the tradition of your fathers: but with the precious blood of Christ." 1 Pet. 1:18-19.

Moreover, all the Fathers of the Church, contrary to the Roman Catholic belief, have in every occasion refused to recognize Tradition as an independent source of authority when it was not identified with or at least in accordance with the Scriptures. So, Basil wrote: "Without doubt it is a most manifest fall from faith, and a most evident sign of pride, to introduce anything that is not written in the Scriptures...and to detract from Scripture or to add anything to the faith that is not there, is most manifestly forbidden by the apostle's saying: If it be but a man's testament, no man addeth thereto." (De Fide, vol. 2, p. 313)

In a letter to Stephen, bishop of Rome, who declared that no innovation could be made upon Tradition, Cyprian said: "Whence comes that tradition? Does it descend from the authority of our Lord and the Gospels? Does it come from the commands and Epistles of the Apostles? God testifies that we must do the things that are written, saying to Joshua: The book of the law shall not depart from thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate in it day and night, that thou mayest observe to do all that is written in it." (Epist. 74, Ad Pompeiurri)

Finally Jerome, the great Catholic translator of the Bible, in his treatise *Adversus Helvetium*, writes: "As we accept those things that are written, so we reject those things that are not written." And elsewhere says: "These things which they invent, as if by Apostolic tradition, without the authority of Scripture, the sword of God smites." (Agg. Proph., chap. 1, 11)

The above statements from a few Church Fathers, who are supposed to be among the most important authorities in the Roman

Church, should be sufficient to show our Catholic friends the weak foundation upon which is built the doctrine of Tradition which is Scripturally wrong and historically false. We have shown with abundance of facts the inconsistency of this fundamental tenet of the Roman Catholic Church from which have come all the erroneous doctrines held today, and therefore we respectfully urge our friends to wholly reject Tradition, because of its human origin and imperfectness, because it is neither apostolic nor divine, because Christ discussed Tradition only to condemn it and to warn Christians to protect themselves from the dreadful ruin that it may cause to their souls. We can be assured that only when Tradition will be thoroughly discarded by all as an independent source of truth and an infallible rule of faith and morals, Christianity may be once again restored to its primitive unity.

### **CHAPTER 3**

#### **THE ALL-SUFFICIENCY OF THE SCRIPTURES**

After having demonstrated the untenable position of the Roman Catholic Church on the Bible and Tradition, it is time to ask our Catholic friends for a fair and thorough examination of our own standard of faith and morals which is the Bible, and the Bible alone. It is imperative to establish a definite and authoritative guide upon which our conscience may depend with certainty in all religious matters, thus avoiding the danger of being led astray by uninspired sources based on human tradition. Men, however good and honest they are, can deceive us in every way. Hidden behind the appearance of religion and covered by a mantle of false holiness, sweet-spoken people have from time immemorable attracted and lured simple-minded multitudes toward beliefs which, although claimed as divine, are in reality an expression of man's authority. Neither priestly garments nor papal luxurious vestments can substitute the divine value that comes down from the Bible. No human doctrine or philosophy, however deep and magnificent, can take the place of the Word of God, revealed by the Holy Spirit to chosen men and consigned to writing in order to be used as a complete and all-sufficient rule of faith and practice from generation to generation till the end of the world. There

cannot be a different fount of revelation, committed for oral transmission unto men, as Romanists believe, unless it is expressly said in the Holy Scriptures. Otherwise, who could assure us of the dependability of that particular channel? Not the Church, because it is built on the Word of God and can not have more authority than that which has been given to it; not the successors of the apostles, because they were told not to go "above that which is written;" not any other human being, because he would be requested to show his divine credentials, namely miracle and prophecy. Who could, therefore, give us more reliability than the Bible? Not even God who expects us to consider the Scriptures as his holy word, containing inspiration and guidance, the revelation of his Son, and finally the way to eternal salvation.

### **NECESSITY OF AN INFALLIBLE GUIDE**

In the bottom of all human souls there is an instinctive aspiration toward something which is stable, definite, absolute, and infallible. This is especially true when speaking about spiritual matters. Jesus Christ, calling men to a supernatural life, had to leave them an infallible guide which would direct them without error and doubt to everlasting salvation. Such a guide cannot reside in men, because they are by nature changeable and perishable; it cannot reside in a religious organization, because this is subject to the same limitations that handicap the work of men. Neither can it be said that it is the result of the written and unwritten revelation, because it has been proved that both are often in contradiction between themselves. A guide such as this requires a religious authority which is perfect, complete, universal, easy to be understood by all everywhere and in every time, fit to satisfy all spiritual aspirations of men, and to settle all religious controversies which may arise. Certainly a similar guide cannot be found in anything else but in God Himself, "who, at sundry times and in divers manners, spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all, in these days, hath spoken to us by his Son." Hebrews 1:1-2. Now, all the revelation of God to man has been written down and is preserved in the Holy Scriptures, which are all-sufficient as a rule of faith and morals and which constitute for all

Christians the only true and infallible guide in their religious life.

### **CATHOLIC RULE OF FAITH HUMAN AND MUTABLE**

As we know, Romanists believe in two sources of divine revelation, namely Bible and Tradition. But, in order that both may become rule or norma of faith and morals, they must pass through the crucible of the Church, the only authoritative voice and absolute master in religious matters. In this way, the Church is placed above the Scriptures and therefore above God himself who is the author of the Bible. The divine revelation has no value in itself independently from the living authority of the Church, which is vested in an infallible interpreter, the pope, who is the ruling and guiding power of God's kingdom on earth, Christ's vicegerent entrusted personally with legislative, executive and judicial power, the final tribunal or supreme court of appeal in the whole universe.<sup>1</sup> For this reason no Catholic can enjoy the right of private or individual interpretation, because only the Church can give the true and authentic interpretation of the Word of God. In fact, the Vatican Council, confirming the decree of the Council of Trent, stated: "In matters of faith and morals pertaining to the building up of Christian doctrine, that is to be held as the true sense of the Sacred Scripture which the Holy Mother Church has held and does hold, to whom it belongs to judge of the true sense and interpretation of Holy Scripture, and therefore that it is permitted to no one to interpret the said Scriptures against this sense or, likewise, against the unanimous consent of the Fathers." Forbidden to be guided directly by the Word of God, Catholics are left with a human and fallible guide, the Church. They must follow men rather than God; they must bow their head to the commandments of the pope because the Bible, as Cardinal Gibbons says, "is far from possessing intrinsic evidences of inspiration, it may contain more than the Word of God, or it may not contain all the Word of God." So, the Cardinal concludes, "the Scriptures can never serve as a complete rule of Faith and a complete guide to heaven independently of an authorized, living interpreter." (Faith of Our Fathers, pp. 82-83) But, if the Scripture which is the true revelation of God is not to be trusted, how can our Catholic friends blindly

believe in a mere human being who despotically overrules the legislative acts of God and presents his own decisions as a rule of faith and an infallible guide to eternal salvation?

(1) The subjects of the papal authority are both Catholics and non-Catholics who also can be excommunicated. In this respect, the Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. V, p. 681, declares: "All who have been baptized are liable to excommunication, even those who have never belonged to the true Church, since by their baptism they are really her subjects, though of course rebellious ones."

Besides, the Roman Catholic rule of faith is mutable, because, based on a human authority, it may change at will. We have already seen the progressive increment of Catholic dogmas and the uncertainty in which Romanists are living about their deposit of revelation which has not yet been fixed and stabilized. History tells us about the shameful failure in many cases of papal infallibility in matters of faith and morals: the condemnation of pope Liberius for having subscribed a semi-Arian confession of faith; the open contradiction between the decrees of pope Gelasius and the Council of Trent concerning the doctrine of transubstantiation and the custom of using only bread instead of both elements in the Lord's Supper; the latest infallible pronouncements of Pius XII on the Rotary Club (Jan. 11, 1951) and Birth Control (Oct. 29, 1951) which the same pope was later forced to withdraw or correct under the unexpected and unfavorable reaction of the American Roman Catholics against them. In a word, the history of the Roman Church shows beyond any doubt changes and contradictions of such a nature that its rule of faith cannot be claimed as divine, apostolic and infallible. In no way does it guarantee the integrity, historical value, canonicity and inspiration of the Scriptures, and their usefulness and spiritual assistance to the Christian people. Consequently, the Bible alone can constitute the complete source and organ of revealed truth and the only sure guide for man's

salvation.

## **CATHOLIC DIFFICULTIES EXPLAINED**

Since the Protestant Reformation which, stressing the all-sufficiency of the Word of God, made the Bible the sole rule of faith after Wyclif and formulated with Luther the principle of the private interpretation of the Scriptures, Roman Catholic theologians have endeavored to stem the spreading of such radical doctrines with a rather violent criticism which can be synthesized in the following three main points.

(1) Scripture is not accessible to everyone—"A complete guide of salvation must be within the reach of every inquirer after truth; for, God 'wishes all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth'; (1 Tim. 2:4) and therefore He must have placed within the reach of everyone the means of arriving at the truth. Now, it is clear that the Scriptures could not at any period have been accessible to everyone." (Faith of Our Fathers, p. 84)

While agreeing with the premise, we deny the inference as a misrepresentation of the facts. Cardinal Gibbons knew better than we may suppose that there has been no period in the history of Christianity in which Scriptures were not available or accessible to everyone. Neither can it be said that people have ever found it difficult to come to the knowledge of God's revelation. It is true that the primitive Christians for a few years had no written records of the New Testament, nevertheless there was at that time the infallible preaching of the apostles through whom the gospel was proclaimed with power unto salvation. That was indeed a glorious period and the true revelation of God was fully communicated by inspired and holy men to all. But, when the New Testament at the end of the apostolic age was completely written down, it was left unto the churches of Christ as the only rule of faith and practice. It is simply foolish to even imagine that the material reading of the Bible is absolutely necessary for the knowledge of God's Word. For many centuries, before the invention of printing, only a few people could own a Bible, it being very difficult and expensive to copy it by hand. We also know that not very many persons were able to read it. Nevertheless, this does not imply that Tradition or

the living voice of the Church substituted the authority of the Bible, as Romanists infer. The Scriptures have constituted in every time the infallible source of truth and the only guide for Christians. Christ intended to save people not through reading, but by hearing the evangelists preaching the Word of God and not man-made doctrines. Paul said it very plainly in Rom. 10:17: "Faith then cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ." Besides, God has always used intermediary causes for the accomplishment of his holy purposes. The work of gospel ministers is therefore indispensable in order to carry on the Lord's work. No one has ever attempted to deny this. What we deny is the substitution of the Church's authority in the place of the Bible. We do not say that Christians are made by owning or reading the Scriptures, but by complying with the commandments of God contained in the Bible, by doing his holy will manifested unto us only through the Bible no matter if by reading or by hearing it. And it is surely within the reach of everyone to understand the gospel message and to find in it the means of arriving at the truth. The language of New Testament literature is an outstanding example of clearness and simplicity. God has spoken to us in a way that any unprejudiced person can understand with certainty those words of life.

Therefore, we may really affirm that the Bible, and the Bible alone, is a complete guide of salvation for all those who want to be saved.

(2) Scripture is obscure and unintelligible— "A complete religious guide must be clear and intelligible to all, so that everyone may fully understand the true meaning of instructions it contains. Is the Bible a book intelligible to all? Far from it; it is full of obscurities and difficulties not only for the illiterate, but even for the learned."

(Ibid., pp. 85-86) That the above statement is false no one can deny. Cardinal Gibbons, calling the Bible an unintelligible book, stated the true feeling of the Roman Catholic Church toward the Holy Scriptures. They are full of obscurities and difficulties and therefore no one can understand them, not even learned men, Romanists say. But, we would like to ask, if such is the case, how can they assume that their pope speaks infallibly when he presents an official doctrinal interpretation from a book that is so difficult to be understood by everyone? And besides, how can they be sure

of the assistance of the Holy Spirit believed to be promised to the successors of Peter when they must prove this from the same obscure Scriptures?

To substantiate their assertion Catholics quote 2 Peter 3:16, where the apostle says that in the epistles of Paul there are "certain things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and the unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, to their own destruction." As usual, Romanists forget that Peter was condemning certain people, unlearned and unstable, who at that time were making troubles among the churches of Christ. They misinterpret the passage in question, generalizing the meaning of the expression "certain things" in "all things," thus putting all the Scriptures on the same level. The conclusion is clear: no one else, except the Roman hierarchy, can interpret lawfully and rightly the Word of God. To support this false assumption is quoted 2 Peter 1:20: "No prophecy of Scripture is made by private interpretation," which is understood by Romanists as a proof against the private judgment of the Bible, while the apostle was simply stating that the Scriptures are not a product of private men, but the result of the holy men of God who spoke through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In fact, in the following verse we read: "For prophecy came not by the will of men at any time: but holy men of God spoke inspired by the Holy Ghost." (1:21) Now, if the Scriptures came from God, how can they be obscure and unintelligible? And, if so, how could men ever know the essential truths concerning their own salvation?

It is true that sometimes the private interpretation of the Bible has led men astray, giving aid to the rise of different denominations doctrinally divided among themselves, but this is not the result of the obscurity or insufficiency of the Scriptures, as Romanists believe; it is rather the sad consequence of the ignorance, pride and ambition of men concerned more about their personal fame than about the establishment of the truth in the world. The principle of private interpretation is based on the spiritual freedom of the individual assured by the Bible, because religion is a matter of choice and not of coercion; it is against the imposition of false tenets by an organized institution and not at all a cause of division

and destruction; it helps to build up Christian spirituality against the dogmatic formalism of Roman Catholic theologians. However, private interpretation does not imply capricious positions, liberalistic ideas, or smattering knowledge of the Scriptures, as Catholics suppose; instead, it requires a careful study of the Bible with a full employment of all rules of exegesis and hermeneutics. Alexander Campbell, in his *Christian System* puts it as follows: "The words and sentences of the Bible are to be translated, interpreted, and understood according to the same code of laws and principles of interpretation by which other ancient writings are translated and understood; for, when God spoke to man in his own language, he spoke as one person converses with another—in the fair, stipulated, and well-established meaning of the terms. This is essential to its character as a revelation from God; otherwise it would be no revelation, but would always require a class of inspired men to unfold and reveal its true sense to mankind." (pp. 15-16)

This is exactly what is happening in the Roman Catholic Church. Having refused to acknowledge the Bible as a clear and sufficient revelation of God, Romanists have need of an infallible man to unveil the true sense of God's Word. Obviously this implies a continual miracle from the side of God which is useless, unreasonable and unscriptural. That is why we invite our Catholic friends to take their Bible, to read and interpret it by themselves, because it is clear and intelligible to all, being sure that everyone can fully understand the fundamental truths contained in it and which are necessary for our spiritual redemption. (3) Scripture is incomplete and insufficient—"A rule of faith, or a competent guide to heaven, must be able to instruct in all the truths necessary for salvation. Now the Scriptures alone do not contain all the truths which a Christian is bound to believe, nor do they explicitly enjoin all the duties which he is obliged to practice." (Ibid. p. 89)

Once again Cardinal Gibbons insists that the Bible does not contain all the truths and therefore our rule of faith is incomplete and fallacious. Needless to say that such a statement is incorrect and without any basis. For us, it would constitute an unforgivable offense unto God to affirm that his revelation is lacking, thus

leaving men without all means to save themselves, and making void the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. But for Romanists it seems to be a glorious thing in behalf of God to have committed his revelation partly to writing and partly to oral tradition. And why? Only because Catholics not having enough Scriptures to prove their false tenets are forced to substantiate them with a non-existent divine revelation of which the Roman Church is supposed to be a jealous guardian and Interpreter. And what examples are they quoting in order to support this unwritten revelation? That, for instance, about the sanctification of Sunday in the place of Saturday which, they believe, is a religious observance not authorized by the New Testament, but commanded by the Roman Catholic Church. Evidently Romanists have overlooked the established practice of the apostles to celebrate the first day of the week instead of the Jewish Sabbath as the Christian Way of rest and worship. In Acts 20:7 Luke tells us that the early Christians held their religious services "on the first day of the week, when we were assembled to break bread." The apostle Paul, inviting the Corinthians to lay in store their offering for the brethren "on the first day of the week," (1 Cor. 16:2) makes a clear allusion to the practice of the Christians to meet together in that special day. Finally, the apostle John in his Apocalypse (Rev.) 1:10 refers himself to the first day of the week as the Lord's day, thus manifesting the established practice among the churches of Christ of having their worship and Christian fellowship every Sunday. This practice, therefore, was not introduced by the authority of the Church, but by the inspired and infallible apostles of Jesus Christ, and though there is not an explicit command for it in the New Testament, nevertheless it is a divinely approved apostolic example coming down directly from their inspired ministry. Very likely the change was made in commemoration of the day of the resurrection of Christ and of the day of Pentecost in which the Church was established. The claim of Romanists is therefore a boastful falsehood.

Another example of the incompleteness of the Scriptures, according to Catholics, would be to pray to the Holy Spirit, a practice which is nowhere found in the Bible, but was introduced by the authority of the Church. Such an affirmation certainly shows

the lack of better reasons in behalf of an untenable position. The Bible teaches us that the Holy Spirit is the third person in the godhead, proceeding from the Father and from the Son, a doctrine which is also believed by Romanists. Now, if it is lawful to pray unto God, the Father, why should it not be scriptural to pray also unto the Son and unto the Holy Spirit? There is only one God, although existing in three distinct personalities. We must therefore conclude that the difficulties of the Roman Church against the all-sufficiency of the Bible as a complete and perfect rule of faith and morals are very weak and inconsistent. They are neither supported by Scripture nor by reason. On the contrary, we may say with Alexander Campbell that "the Bible is to the intellectual and moral world of man what the sun is to the planets in our system—the fountain and source of light and life, spiritual and eternal." (Christian System, p. 15)

### **THE BIBLE AS FINAL AND UNCHANGEABLE AUTHORITY**

John Wyclif, one of the greatest champions of the Reformation together with Huss and Luther, who, incidentally, were all Roman Catholic priests, stated the true position of Christianity when he said: "The sacred Scriptures contain all truth, all philosophy, all logic, all ethical teaching." It can be affirmed with certainty that in the whole human race there is not a spiritual idea that is not drawn from the Bible. As soon will the philosopher find an independent sunbeam in nature, as the theologian a spiritual conception in man, independent of the one best Book. (Christian System, p. 15) In the Thirty-nine Articles it is declared that the "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation, so that whatsoever is not read therein nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of the faith or to be taught requisite or necessary to salvation." Almost with the same words the Westminster Confession states: "The whole council of God, covering all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture, unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether

by new revelation of the Spirit or traditions of men."

Condemning the Roman Catholic aversion to translating the Bible in the vernacular tongue, John Wyclif says: "Believers should ascertain by themselves what are the true matters of their faith by having the Scriptures in a language which all may understand for the laws made by prelates are not to be received as matters of faith unless founded on the Scriptures." Besides, Tyndale, giving the reason of the Romanist opposition against the translation of the Bible, writes: "In this way they all be agreed to drive you from the knowledge of Scripture and that you shall not have the text in the mother tongue, and to keep the world in darkness to the extent they might sit in the consciences of the people through vain superstition."

From the above statements flows the conclusion that the Bible alone may really and truly constitute the final authority in religious matters, because, being the complete revelation of God to man, it can offer us an unchangeable and infallible guidance that cannot be found elsewhere. Such a belief is not based on human traditions, but is the logical consequence of Scripture references and of the writings of the Fathers.

### **BIBLE PROVED BY THE BIBLE**

As the final court of appeal, the Bible is the only place where we may invite our Catholic friends to go and find for themselves the authoritative proofs about the all-sufficiency of the Word of God. If they show no trust in the Scriptures, it means that they have no faith in God who is the author of the Bible, and consequently there is no possibility of bringing them unto the truth.

In the gospel of John, Jesus appealed to the Bible as giving eternal life to the Jews and as bearing a divine testimony for himself: "Search the Scriptures: for ye think in them to have life everlasting. And the same are they that give testimony of me." (5:39) In the same occasion Jesus recognized the probative strength of the Scriptures to which only he refers in his continual debates with the Jews: "For if you did believe Moses, you would perhaps believe me also: for he wrote of me." John 5:46. Nowhere did Christ quote Jewish traditions; nay he condemned them as

something very evil, as we have already seen previously. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus the sufficiency of the Scriptures is again stressed in the following words: "They have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them." And because the rich man insisted that Abraham should send someone from the dead in order to convince his kindred on earth, father Abraham answered: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe, if one rise again from the dead." Luke 16:29-31. Romanists, who insist so much on the living voice of the Church as their rule of faith and morals, should study very well these remarkable passages in which salvation is placed not in the Jewish priesthood or church, but in the written Word of God. They had a high priest, Pontifex Maximus, and a host of other priests and doctors of the law, why did not Abraham send the rich man's relatives to them who constituted the so-called living magisterium of the Church?

Moreover, the apostle Paul, writing to Timothy, shows the special importance of the Scriptures which, containing divine truths, are the revelation of God and have divine authority: "And because from thy infancy thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which can instruct thee to salvation, by the faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture, inspired of God, is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice: That the man of God may be perfect, furnished to every good work." 2 Tim. 3:15-17. Can there be a clearer statement than this one? The Bible is complete and sufficient, able to provide men of all things necessary for their salvation. Again, in Rom. 15:4 the apostle says that "what things soever were written were written for our learning: that through patience and the comfort of Scriptures, we might have hope." And John, the beloved disciple, in his Apocalypse (Rev. 1:3) wishes heavenly blessings upon all those who read or hear the Word of God and keep the things that are written: "Blessed is he that readeth and heareth the words of this prophecy: and keepeth those things which are written in it." Finally, Jesus in his marvelous prayer to the Father identifies God with the truth and his Word: "I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them... Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." John 17:14-17.

The Word of God has been consigned to Scripture and therefore only in that holy Book we may find truth and eternal life. There is no other authority in the world which can be substituted for the Bible.

### **CHURCH FATHERS EXALT SCRIPTURE**

When the Canon of the New Testament was formulated, it was taken for granted that the apostolic doctrine had been expressed once for all in the books now canonized, and that the final reference was to the books. So it was laid down peremptorily by Origen, by Athanasius, by the Fathers generally without any hesitation. The great obstacle to the acceptance of the test word *homousios* (consubstantial) at Nicaea was that the word was not in Scripture; and the obstacle was only overcome by the evidence that no other word would really exclude the Arian idea of a demi-god, and that the Church had the duty of guarding and protecting what was really the faith of Scripture, even, if necessary, by a new word. But during the years of controversy following Nicaea almost all the argument is conducted on the field of Scripture with little reference to the Council. In his Catechetical lectures St. Cyril of Jerusalem says to his catechumens: "Do not believe me simply, unless you receive the proof of what I say from Holy Scripture"; "keep that faith only which the Church is now giving to you, and which is certificated out of the Holy Scripture." We stand astonished at the particularity with which St. Chrysostom insists on his flock having their family Bibles, and studying them for themselves. Nor does he stand alone in this. Writer after writer insists that the purity of the faith can only be maintained by constant familiarity on the part of the members of the Church generally with the Scriptures." (Prestige, in *Roman Catholic Claims*, iv)

Athanasius definitely believed in the all-sufficiency of the Bible when he wrote: "The Holy and inspired Scriptures are sufficient of themselves for the preaching of the truth." (*Contra Gentes*, vol. I p. 1)

Long before Irenaeus, who is considered by Romanists an authority in behalf of Tradition, left no doubt about his belief in the

completeness of the Bible. He said: "We should leave things of that nature to God who created us, being most perfectly assured that the Scriptures are indeed perfect, since they were spoken by the Word of God and His Spirit." (Against Heresies, vol. I. p. 220)

Elsewhere he affirms that the Scriptures are the foundation of our faith: "We have learned from no others the plan of our salvation, than from those through whom the gospel has come down to us, which they did at one time proclaim in public, and at a later period, by the will of God, handed down to us in the Scriptures to be the ground and the pillar of our faith... For after our Lord rose from the dead the apostles were invested with power from on high when the Holy Spirit came down, were filled from all his gifts, and had perfect knowledge." (Ibid., vol. III, p. 1)

These testimonies of the Fathers clearly show how they regarded the Scriptures in their time. Our Catholic friends may learn from them how to appreciate the Word of God in which they will find truth and spiritual freedom. We invite them to read and study the Bible which is complete and sufficient, the full revelation of God unto salvation, the source of all truths, the infallible guide in our daily life, the sole rule of faith and morals which may enable us to become members of the body of Christ, children of God and heirs of grace in the eternal kingdom of heaven.

## **PART II**

### **The Hierarchical Structure of Romanism**

Only when Roman Catholics have agreed to accept the Bible as the sole rule of faith and morals may we proceed to discuss with them more specific doctrines concerning Romanism. If they have not yet reached such a stage, it is better to wait until they have understood the importance of having a common ground of authority; doing otherwise would constitute a useless effort that would lead us nowhere. As a matter of fact, in the eventuality that our Catholic friends, after the discussion of the previous chapters, do not realize the falsity of human traditions it is exceedingly wise to give up with them, looking for better prospects. When Paul and Silas did not succeed to convert the Jews of Thessalonica they went away to Berea, finding there a much different kind of people

whose wonderful attitude merited them the praise of Luke: "Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, who received the word with all eagerness, daily searching the scriptures, whether these things were so. And many indeed of them believed." Acts 17-11-12. And Jesus Christ, sending forth his apostles in their first missionary journey, warned them not to waste precious time with stubborn listeners: "And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words: going forth out of that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet." Matt. 10:14. This is the right decision that we have to make when faced with similar circumstances.

On the contrary, if our Catholic friends are willing to be guided by the divine light emanating from the Bible, then we should step further presenting to them one by one the fundamental tenets of Roman Catholicism which are in open contradiction with the Word of God. And first of all, we would like to suggest taking under consideration, in this second part of our personal work, the hierarchical structure of Romanism that constitutes the cornerstone upon which is based the totalitarian power of the Roman Church. In three successive chapters we shall examine the rise of this power through the claim of Peter's primacy and his successors, through the alleged infallibility of the pope, and through the privileged position of priesthood. Only knocking down such a structure with scriptural and historical evidences may we be able to accomplish the main object of our second evangelistic effort, and that is, the demonstration of the human constitution of the Roman Catholic Church.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **FROM THE PRIMACY OF PETER TO THE SUPREMACY OF THE POPE**

The foundation upon which is mainly built the Roman Catholic system of religion is to be found in the traditional doctrine concerning the so-called primacy of Peter from which, at a later time, was developed that of the supremacy of the pope. This is such a basic tenet that a denial of the same would prove fatal to the whole constitution of the Church of Rome. It really constitutes the substructural support for all the claims that have been made by

Romanists throughout the centuries. For this very reason they have tried to substantiate it with many scriptural passages and historical evidences that, according to them, should furnish an irrefragable proof in behalf of their alleged doctrine.

### **ORIGIN OF THE PRIMACY**

According to the Roman Catholic position Jesus Christ established the church as a hierarchical society composed of subjects and leaders. Above this society of believers He ordained a college of apostles with the infallible authority of teaching, legislating, and judging all things concerning doctrine and morals. But because in every organized body there is need of a head or president to whom the other members must obey and be subject, so Christ in his church appointed one to have full authority and primacy both upon the faithful and upon the bishops. Conclusion of such a reasoning is that Peter was made by divine right "the first pope and bishop of Rome, Prince of the Apostles, Vicar of Jesus Christ, and human foundation of the Church." (A Catholic Dictionary, p. 402)

Cardinal Gibbons asserts the primacy of Peter and his successors as follows: "Our Lord conferred on St. Peter the first place of honor and jurisdiction in the government of His Holy Church, and that the same spiritual supremacy has always resided in the Popes, or Bishops of Rome, as being the successors of St. Peter. Consequently, to be true the laity, must be in communion with the See of Rome, followers of Christ all Christians, both among the clergy where Peter rules in the person of his successor." (Faith of Our Fathers, p. 95)

In explaining such a doctrine, the theologians go on to say that this primacy is not merely one of honor but of jurisdiction which comprises the power of legislating, of judging, and of securing obedience and submission by appropriate sanctions. It is universal, that is affecting all Christians; it is ordinary because inherent to the office and therefore is permanent; it comes directly from Christ and is exercised immediately (not necessarily through bishops) over the faithful; it is independent of the civil power and from it there is no appeal, not even to an ecumenical council. (A Catholic

Dictionary, p. 412)

This last affirmation was made a dogmatic pronouncement at the Council of Florence (1439) against those Romanists who believed that the authority of the general council was superior to that of the Roman chair. In a famous canon of that council the doctrine of the primacy of Peter and of the supremacy of the pope was definitely asserted: "We define the holy apostolic See and the Roman Pontiff to have primacy over the whole earth, and the Roman Pontiff to be himself the successor of the Blessed Peter, chief of the Apostles, and the true Vicar of Christ, and to exist as head of the whole Church and father and teacher of all Christians; and that to him, in the Blessed Peter, our Lord Jesus Christ has committed full power of feeding, governing and directing the universal Church, even as is contained both in the acts of the ecumenical councils and in the sacred canons." The same definition was permanently restated in the later Councils of Trent and Vatican in which curses were also fulminated against holders of different views. No Catholic bishop alone or assembled in council would dare today to put in doubt the absolute power placed in the hands of one man, even knowing that it is a bare-faced usurpation. The glorious freedom enjoyed by the leaders of the primitive church has been lost forever by the so-called successors of the apostles, who are nothing more than puppets or tools in the hand of a religious tyrant who can loose or bind the consciences of the faithful, can open or shut at will the doors of Christ's kingdom.

### **PETER'S PRIMACY EXAMINED**

In order to be fair and honest with our Catholic friends we must be willing to admit that Peter since the beginning of his calling received a particular attention from the Lord which eventually resulted in a position of pre-eminence exercised both during the ministry of Jesus and the early years of the church. In fact, with prophetic insight into Simon's character, Jesus at once conferred upon him the surname of Cephas, or Peter, that is, "stone" (John 1:35:42). He is always named first in the lists of the apostles (Matt. 10:2; Mark 3:16; Luke 6:14; Acts 1:13). In the more intimate circle of the most favored three disciples, he is

likewise always named first (Matt. 17:1; Mark 5:37; 9:2; 13:3; 14:33; Luke 8:51; 9:28). He was the natural spokesman of the apostolic band. He was the first to confess Jesus as the Christ of God, but was equally favored to dissuade him from his chosen path of suffering, receiving from Christ the appropriate praise and blame (Matt. 16:16-23; Mark 8:29-33). He was treated with distinguished honor by the Lord, and was granted a special appearance after the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:5).

As exhibited in the earlier chapters of the Acts, he was instrumental in the establishment of the church of Christ. It was by his bold and strong hands that the church was led in every step. It was he who moved the disciples to fill up the broken ranks of the apostolate (Acts 1:15); it was he who proclaimed to the assembled multitudes the meaning of the Pentecostal effusion (2:14); he was the leader in the public healing of the lame man and in the subsequent sermon and defense (3:4-12; 4:8); it was by his voice that Ananias and Sapphira were rebuked (5:3-8). Above all, it was by his hand that the door of salvation was opened alike to the Jews in the great sermon at Pentecost (2:10-38) and to the Gentiles in the case of Cornelius (10).

However, this pre-eminence has nothing to do with the so-called primacy advocated by Romanists. It was only a pre-eminence of honor due to Peter's ardor, earnestness, courage, vigor, impetuosity of disposition, and sincere love toward Christ rather than an official appointment or election to the task. It was a chairmanship among equals without any special privilege of jurisdiction over his fellow-apostles which would have been contrary to the spirit of Christ who warned his disciples with such symptomatic words: "You know that the princes of the Gentiles lord it over them and they that are the greater exercise power over them. It shall not be so among you." Matt. 20:25-26. The special mission entrusted to Peter was carried out by the apostle with a spirit of humility and submission to the suggestions of others that is in striking contrast with the absolute power exercised by the Roman papacy. Besides, it was a mission personal to Peter and not transmissible to others. As a matter of fact, as soon as the foundations of the church had been laid, Peter took a subordinate

place, and in the humble labors to spread the boundaries of the kingdom of Christ disappeared from the page of history. In the church at Jerusalem James takes henceforth the leading place (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; Gal. 2:9-12). The door had been opened to the Gentiles, and Paul now becomes the apostle to the Gentiles (Gal. 2:7). As the apostle to the circumcision (Gal. 2:8), Peter prosecuted henceforth his less brilliant work, wherever Jews could be found, and contentedly left Jerusalem to James and the Gentile world to Paul. The book of Acts closes its account of him at the meeting at Jerusalem (15) when his policy of breaking down the barriers for the Gentiles met with universal acceptance. We hear of him afterward at Antioch (Gal. 2:11), possibly at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:12), and certainly as prosecuting his work through missionary journeys, taking his wife with him (1 Cor. 9:5). Finally he glorified God by a martyr's death (John 21:19). Beyond this, Scripture tells us nothing of his fortunes, labors, sufferings, or successes, except what can be learned from his two epistles. In them he stands before us in a singularly beautiful humility, not pressing the recognition of personal claims to leadership upon the Christian community, but following up the teaching of Paul or of Jude with his own and exhorting his readers to hold fast to the common faith. (Westminster Dictionary, p. 473)

In this scriptural picture of Peter there is no room for dictatorial assumptions made by unscrupulous men in order to build up a precedent for later claims. The inspired records have no hint whatever about Peter being the absolute leader of the church, the first pope and vicar of Christ. These are conclusions that came into being much later as a result of a long and dreadful struggle between Eastern and Western churches for the domination of Christendom. Consequently, the pre-eminence of Peter can not be confused with the papal primacy of the bishop of Rome; it is a democratic leadership intended to lead the faithful and not to dominate them, to serve and minister unto them rather than to command them, just as Christ ordered his followers: "Whosoever will be the greater among you, let him be your minister. And he that will be the first among you shall be your servant." Matt. 20:26-27. The leaders of the church of Christ, namely evangelists,

elders, and deacons, must not be masters or absolute rulers, but only stewards or administrators of the flock committed unto them. They must uphold the Word of God and not teach commandments of men, as the popes of Rome have done and do. That is why Peter's primacy can not be taken as a precedent to prove the totalitarian supremacy of the Roman see.

Furthermore, if it was the intention of Jesus to create Peter and his successors supreme monarchs of the universal church, He should have said so in the Scriptures. Not only is Christ silent on that matter, but He thinks so little about giving a head to his church that when He promised to the apostles the power of judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt. 19:28), He promised them twelve thrones, one for each one, without saying that that of Peter would have been higher than the others. Undoubtedly an equal authority was given to all the apostles when first sent forth by Christ (Matt. 10:1-15), in the great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20), in the promise of the Holy Spirit (John 20:21-23), and in the power of loosing and binding (Matt. 18:18). Such instances necessarily preclude the primacy of one of them. Besides, when Paul gives a detailed list of the officers of the church in 1 Cor. 12:28 and in Eph. 4:11 he fails to mention either by name or character such a fundamental office like that of pope or vicar of Christ. How could Paul, the greatest doctor of the church, forget to mention the papacy if this was really of divine institution? Neither did he make any reference in all his letters to Peter's primacy; nay, he says to have labored more abundantly than they all and to be not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles (1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 11:5). If this primacy was truly in existence, if, in other words, the church had in its constitution a supreme head, why have all the inspired writers been silent about it? Is it possible that when the edifice of the Christian doctrine was in full development there could have been forgotten the foundation, the cornerstone? The truth is that neither the evidences of Scripture nor the logical deductions of reason can support the Roman Catholic doctrine of the primacy of Peter and his successors.

## **WAS PETER EVER IN ROME?**

Though Romanists today affirm that the presence of Peter in Rome was not essential for the transmission of his primacy to the Roman bishops, yet they feel that a proof of it would demonstrate beyond doubt the supremacy of that apostolic see over the Christian world. And indeed if Peter did not live and die in Rome, it would be impossible for us to understand how they could consistently claim that he was the first bishop of the eternal city. In such a case the apostolic succession of the popes would lack the first ring of the chain and, consequently, the whole edifice of the Roman primacy would fall in ruin. That is why they have used hands and teeth in order to establish a tradition that has proved to be so useful in behalf of this Catholic claim.

It is the Roman Catholic position that Peter, after his release from prison (Acts 12), went to Rome (the "other place" of Acts 12:17) and there established a Christian community, over which he presided, as a monarchical bishop, for twenty-five years (A. D. 42-67), the period which a newly-elected pope is warned on the morning of his coronation that he is not likely to surpass ("Annos Petri non superabis"). This theory is indeed of considerable antiquity, having been traced back with great probability to Hippolytus (A. D. 235); but it is sufficiently refuted by the fact that Paul's epistle to the Romans, which must have reached Rome in the middle of Peter's alleged episcopate, contains no greetings or even mention of him and his work there. On the contrary, it is implied that no apostle has yet visited it. For such is the inference that must be drawn from Rom. 1:11, in which Paul expresses his wish to see the Roman Christians in order that he might impart some spiritual gifts to the end that they might be established. Besides, from Rome Paul wrote several letters in which no message is sent from Peter, while in the very last of them he complains of being left alone and that only Luke was with him. The conclusion is that neither at the time of Paul's letter nor during his permanence in Rome, do we have evidence of the presence of Peter in the capital of the empire. Hence, Irenaeus was mistaken in calling Peter, as well as Paul, the "founders" of the church of Rome.

A Priori, it would seem a sufficient explanation of the genesis of the Roman church to suppose that it came into existence by the fortuitous confluence to the capital of persons who had already been converted to Christianity in other parts of the empire. "Sojourners of Rome" (that is, Jews and proselytes domiciled in Rome) are said to have witnessed the outpouring of the Spirit on the nucleus of the Christian brotherhood (Acts 2:10); some of them may well have been amongst the three thousand who were converted on the day of Pentecost, and may have carried the Christian faith with them back to the imperial city. It follows therefore that the origin of the church of Rome is not to be ascribed, as in the case of some other cities, to the exertions of some missionary arriving with the express intention of evangelizing the city, but was due to silent and spontaneous growth. (The Epistle to the Romans by N. P. Williams)

As to Peter's martyrdom the prophecy in John 21:18-19 is in harmony with early tradition in pointing to a violent death. But of the time and place of that death we know nothing with even approximate probability. The only historical mention of him for more than a hundred years afterwards is in Clement of Rome (Epistl. 1, 5, 4), who set before the Corinthians the example of "Peter, who through zeal undertook not one or two but numerous labors, and so having born witness went to the place that was due to him." It is sometimes supposed that an indication of the place in which he "bore witness" or "suffered martyrdom" is afforded by the phrase "among us," namely Romans, in the next chapter; but this, though possible, is quite uncertain. Likewise uncertain is the testimony of Ignatius who, writing to the Romans (c. 4), said of Peter and Paul that "in their death they were not divided." But from the beginning of the last quarter of the second century the testimony to the presence and death of Peter at Rome is almost uniform; the tradition, whatever may have been its foundation in fact, had firmly established itself. Dyonisius of Corinth (Euseb. Hist. Ecd., vol. 2, 25, 8) says that Peter and Paul founded the church at Corinth together and then proceeded to Italy; the Muratorian Fragment (A. D. 170) refers to the "passion of Peter," that is, his martyrdom in Rome; the presbyter Gaius (Eus. H. E.,

vol. 2, 25, 7) early in the third century says that he saw the tombs of the two apostles Peter and Paul at Rome; in Tertullian (Scorp., c. 15; De Praescr. c. 24-36) the tradition is fairly established, and no later Latin father expresses any doubt of it.

But, besides the fact that there is an interval of more than a hundred years between what must have been, in the ordinary course of nature even if not through violence, the approximate time of Peter's death and the first tradition of the place and manner of it, there are two other important considerations which render the ordinary patristic statements doubtful. (1) One stream of tradition represents Peter as having worked at Antioch, in Asia Minor, in Babylonia, and in the "country of the Barbarians" on the northern shores of the Black Sea. This is in harmony with the geographical details of the first of the two epistles which bear his name. That epistle is addressed to the "elect who are sojourners of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia," and the "Babylon" from which it is obviously written (5:13) is best understood not as a cryptographic expression for Rome, but, like the other geographical names of the epistles of the New Testament, in a literal sense. All this, no doubt, is not inconsistent with the supposition that Peter went to Rome towards the end of his life, but it seems to exclude the theory that he made a lengthened stay there and was the founder of the Roman Church. (2) The other consideration is that the presence of Peter at Rome is almost inextricably bound up with a story of whose legendary character there can be little doubt, that of Simon Magus of the Clementines. Under the name of Simon Magus the conservative Jewish Christians, who could never forgive the admission of the Gentiles to be "fellow-heirs" with the "children of promise," seem to have represented Paul; and, throwing back into the first century, and into the personal relations between the two apostles (the violent controversies between the Catholic and the Jewish parties which came to a head in the second century), they formed a romance of which Peter was the hero, and in which, under the mask of Simon Magus, Paul played the part of the "false apostle." In course of time the original identity of Paul with Simon Magus was forgotten, and in the later forms of the legend Peter and Paul are joined

together in the combat with the pretender. (Encyclopedia Britannica, vol. 18, pp. 695-696)

The probabilities of the case are evenly balanced; on the one hand it is difficult to account for the complete silence as to Peter in the Pauline letters, in the Acts, and in the writings of Josephus, silence which makes it impossible to regard Peter as the founder or the local bishop of the Roman community; on the other hand, it is difficult to suppose that so large a body of tradition had no foundation in fact, especially if we consider the approval or silence of the Oriental Church interested, like Rome, in the claim of the primacy.

Nevertheless, even agreeing with Romanists that Peter lived for a while and suffered martyrdom in Rome, it does not follow that he reigned there as a monarchical bishop or pope, exercising authority over all the church. Ireneus and Eusebius flatly assert that Linus was the first bishop of the Roman church and they do not mention Peter as having ever held that office. Furthermore, Ireneus ascribes the establishment of that church to both Paul and Peter, saying: "The blessed apostles having founded and built the church, committed the episcopal office to Linus" (Adv. Haeres., bk. 3, c. 3). We would like to ask here why should Peter and not Paul be the first bishop of Rome when both are shown as holding the same authority? Moreover, when Ignatius and other ancient writers mention Peter in relation to Rome it is always in reference to his missionary activity there and not at all in regard to his primacy which no father or bishop ever attributed to him for at least the first four hundred years. Finally, the several lists of the Roman bishops are often contradictory and while they could be useful to prove the presence of Peter in Rome, they have no weight whatever to demonstrate his primacy. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that neither scriptural nor historical evidences can allow Romanists to infer from the doubtful residence of Peter in Rome that he was also the first pope of the Catholic Church. This would be a deduction unwarranted by the premise, besides being disproved by the facts.

### **PETER AND THE ROCK**

However, it is from the Scripture that Romanists draw their

strongest inferences in behalf of Peter's primacy, and the most frequently quoted passage is Matthew 16:18-19: "And I say to thee: That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church. And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shall bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shall loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven."

The Roman Catholic interpretation of this passage is that Jesus Christ promised to make Peter in recompense for his solemn profession of faith in the divinity of his Lord, the rock-foundation for the support of the building of the church in the quality of chief pastor, ruler, and governor. The Catholic Encyclopedia states that in Aramaic the word "kepha" is used for both Petros and petra and therefore these words must be identical in meaning; so that, according to Romanists, the sentence in the original language should read as follows: "Thou art a rock, and upon this rock I will build my church." Commenting this text, Cardinal Gibbons affirms: "Jesus our Lord, founded but one church, which He was pleased to build on Peter. Therefore, any church that does not recognize Peter as its foundation stone is not the Church of Christ, and therefore cannot stand, for it is not the work of God." (Faith of Our Fathers, p. 100)

While agreeing with the Cardinal that Jesus established but one church, we can not accept the conclusion that it was built on Peter alone. Not only would such a belief be against the Scripture in which is said that the church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ himself being the chief cornerstone" (Eph. 2:20), but it would contradict the interpretation given to Matthew 16:18 by the early fathers of the church. In fact, the doctrine that Christ had built his church on Peter was prominently announced for the first time in the council of Chalcedon (451) with the famous words: "The twice blessed and all honored Peter who is the rock and basis of the Catholic Church and the foundation of the orthodox faith." But even then these words were not used to urge a claim to any pre-eminence by the bishop of Rome. They were spoken to give force to the condemnation of Dioscoros who was the most unpopular man in the episcopal assembly at Chalcedon.

Before that time, most of the fathers referred the expression "upon this rock" to Peter's faith and confession: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. In this respect, St. Cyril affirms in his treatise on the Trinity: "I do believe that by the rock you must understand the unshakable faith of the apostle." Likewise St. Hilary of Poitiers, the father of the western theology, says: "The rock is that unique and blessed faith confessed by the mouth of Peter" (De Trin. bk. 2). And again in book 4: "It is upon the confession of faith that the church is built."

At the close of the fourth century St. Jerome, writing to Jovinian, made statements that are in open contradiction with posterior Roman Catholic teaching: "But you reply that the church was founded on Peter, though that same thing was done in another place upon all apostles (Matt. 18:18), and all of them received the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and the solidity of the church is established equally upon them all... But why was not John chosen, who was a virgin? Peter was an apostle, and John was an apostle, the first married, the second a virgin. But Peter was nothing else than an apostle; John was both an apostle, and an evangelist and a prophet."

Elsewhere he says that "God has founded His Church upon this rock, that is, the confession of faith, and it is from this rock that the apostle Peter got his name" (Comment. on Matthew, bk. 4). He further states that Peter was made leader of the apostles because he was the oldest in the group: "Deference was paid to age because Peter was the elder." But he emphasizes that his leadership did not infringe upon the equality and rights of others.

After him, Chrysostom, perhaps the greatest preacher of his generation, declares in unmistakable terms: "On this rock; that is, the faith of his confession. He did not say upon Peter, for it was not upon man, but upon his faith." The same interpretation was advocated also by Ambrose, the holy bishop of Milan, Gregory of Nyssa, Isidore of Pelusium, Theodoret, Theophanes, Theophylect, John of Damascus and many others.

Finally Augustine, probably the greatest mind of the Catholic Church, writing in the fifth century, did not hold the position of present-day Romanists as to Peter's having primacy over others,

and not at all as to transmitting to others any special spiritual authority. In fact, in his sermon on Matthew 16:18 he affirms that the church was not built on Peter but on Christ: "Simon he was called before: but his name of Peter was given him by the Lord and that in figure to signify the Church. For because Christ is the Rock (Petra), Peter (Petros) is the Christian people. For the Rock (Petra) is the principal word. Therefore Peter (Petros) is from Petra, not Petra from Petros: as Christ is not called from the Christian, but the Christian from Christ. "Thou art therefore," said he, "Peter, and upon this Rock, which thou hast confessed, upon this Rock which thou hast recognized, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,' I will built my Church. Upon me I will built thee, not me upon thee."

What Augustine thought on this famous passage of the gospel was the general opinion and belief of contemporary Christianity. This should be sufficient to open the eyes of our Catholic friends and recognize with all fairness that Matthew 16:18 was not always interpreted as Peter being the rock-foundation of the church. For at least 450 years, when prejudice and tradition did not disturb the mind of the fathers and when Greek was the spoken language of the people, there was hardly one of them in either the Eastern or Western Church to connect the building of the universal church on Peter with the transmission of his authority to the Roman see. Can the testimony of such I learned and holy men be discarded as obsolete and prejudiced?

But even accepting the Catholic interpretation that the rock (petra) refers to Peter (Petros), the Romanist claim for the papacy still has no proof. In this case they should demonstrate (1) that Peter alone was the founder of Christianity; but such an assumption is opposed to both Scripture and history. (2) That he was vicegerent of Christ and absolute ruler over all Christians, which is against all tone and tenor of New Testament polity. (3) That the alleged primacy of Peter was transmissible, of which there is no evidence either in the Bible or in church history. (4) That Peter's supposed transmissible supremacy was actually transmitted to the bishops of Rome, and this contradicts the historical facts of the first five centuries of Christianity. Once again Matthew 16:18

does not help the Roman Catholics a bit.

However, today, after grammatical researches made by competent scholars on this passage, the controversy could be easily solved if Peter would be considered as one of the many stones upon which the church is built. Such an interpretation is suggested from the separate and distinct meaning that Petros (a loose stone) and petra (a mass of rocks, or cliff) have in the Koine Greek. So, Matthew 16:18 should be rendered in this way: "Thou art a stone (Peter) and upon this mass of stones (all the apostles and disciples) I will build my church." This type of translation would be in accordance with the Roman Catholic position about Peter being the rock and, at the same time, would harmonize with Peter's statement in 1 Pet. 2:5, "Ye also, as living stones (lithoi), are built up a spiritual house," and also with Paul's in Ephesians 2:19-20: "Ye are fellow-citizens with the saints... being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets."

In all three of these passages Christians are spoken of as stones or a mass of rocks for a building. Peter explained that they were stones used for building a spiritual house. Does this not re-echo the true, reasonable meaning of what Jesus told him that day in Caesarea Philippi? At least, we have interpretations from both Peter and Paul clearly teaching that all Christians, not Peter alone, were stones or rocks. Besides, Paul mentioned all the apostles, and not Peter only, as being the foundation of this spiritual building, namely the church. (J. R. Mantey, *Was Peter a Pope?*, pp. 16-19)

### **PETER AND THE KEYS**

According to Romanists, with the promise of the keys Jesus Christ bestowed upon Peter absolute mastery and complete domination over the church. Unquestionably in ancient times, and especially among the oriental people, the giving of the keys symbolized authority, and even today they may be taken as an emblem of power. But the interpretation given to them by Romanists is far from the meaning intended by Christ who never dreamed of establishing within his church a monarch with limitless authority. Otherwise it would be difficult to understand Matthew 23:8-10. The most reasonable explanation is that the keys

committed to Peter were the keys of knowledge (Luke 11:52; Matt. 23:13); and in that case the ensuing words about binding and loosing would suggest that Peter is pictured rather as the authoritative teacher of the New Law than as the quasi-political ruler of Christendom. Jesus, in promising him the keys of the kingdom of heaven, declares that Peter will be a competent and accredited rabbi, who will be divinely helped and guided in the fulfillment of his task as the leading interpreter of his Master's mind. (Catholicism and Christianity by Cadoux, p. 388)

Centuries before John Calvin gave the very same interpretation: "The comparison of the keys is very properly applied to the office of teaching; as when Christ says (Luke 11:52) that the Scribes and Pharisees, in like manner, have the key of the kingdom of heaven, because they are expounders of the law. We know that there is no other way in which the gate of life is opened to us than by the Word of God; and hence, it follows that the key is placed, as it were, in the hands of the ministers of the Word." (Commentary on the Gospels)

The keys were the insignia of the office of scribe, the teacher of the law of God, and therefore the keys promised to Peter were not the keys by which he could lord over the church at will, but were the keys for opening the kingdom of heaven both to the Jews first and to the Gentiles later. This great commission entrusted to him by Christ in Matthew 16:19, was carried on by Peter with power and success when, on the day of Pentecost, he, as the scribe and teacher of the New Law, opened the heavenly kingdom to all Israel and to the assembled Jews of many lands, three thousand of whom were converted. Again, when the kingdom of heaven is to be opened to the Gentile nations, Peter by divine direction is assigned to the task. He preached the gospel, power of God unto salvation, to Cornelius and his household, and the first Christian converts from heathen nations were born into the kingdom of Jesus. So, the keys of the grace of God were first used by Peter in accordance with the promise of Christ. But he was not the only one to use them; also Paul and other apostles and evangelists have used them with marvelous results. Even today, and till the end of time, all those who, obeying the commandment of Christ, will go and

preach the gospel to all the world, leading people to faith in Jesus and full surrender to him, will make use of the keys of the kingdom of heaven. For the granting of the keys did not authorize Peter to open directly the doors of heaven by forgiving and punishing. He was granted only the privilege that all Christians have, and that is, to convince people to accept Christ's condition of salvation and then be allowed to enter into the kingdom. For Jesus and not Peter is the door: "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved" (John 10:9); Jesus and not Peter is "the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (14:8). Peter was not called to give salvation, but to preach the gospel of Christ, of which he was granted the key of understanding, being the first to grasp that Jesus was the Messiah, the Saviour of the world. It is obvious therefore that with the promise of the keys Jesus Christ did not confide to Peter any primacy or spiritual dictatorship to be exercised over the church either by him or his successors.

### **PETER AND THE SHEEP**

Another famous passage used by Romanists in support of the theory of primacy is John 21:15-17, called by the theologians the fulfillment of the promise: "Jesus saith to Simon Peter: Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these? He said to him: Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He saith to him: Feed my lambs. He saith to him again: Simon, son of John, lovest thou me? He saith to him: Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He saith to him: Feed my lambs. He saith to him the third time: Simon, son of John, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he had said to him the third time: Lovest thou me? And he said to him: Lord, thou knowest all things: thou knowest that I love thee. He said to him: Feed my sheep."

According to Romanists, in this passage Jesus Christ endowed Peter with power of feeding and ruling the whole Christian sheepfold without any exception or limitation. The promise made to him in Matthew 16:18-19 is here fulfilled by charging him with spiritual supremacy both over the lambs, in which are symbolized the faithful, and over the sheep which stand for the clergy. But such an interpretation is absolutely gratuitous being in

disagreement with the facts recorded in the Bible. First of all, the threefold question of Jesus is related to the three-fold denial of the Master by Peter. That is why the Lord prayed for him, "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." Peter badly needed this divine assistance because the Wicked One was sifting him like wheat (Luke 22:31-32). The result of the prayer was that, even though Peter denied thrice his Lord, in the end he was restored to the grace of God. But because this denial was public, Jesus Christ wanted also public the restoration of his passionate apostle. Hence, three times He asked Peter if he loved him. It was a triple confession of love which was exceedingly convenient after his triple negation of Jesus. Naturally, after his confirmation in faith and love, the Lord told him to feed again his lambs and sheep. There is nothing spectacular in this. Peter was selected together with the others to become a fisherman of souls, and now that Jesus Christ is sure of his repentance and conversion reconfides unto Peter the previous task of preaching the gospel, of strengthening the brethren, of feeding the flock. Had any other apostle committed the same fault, surely Jesus would have acted with him as He did with Peter. However, it must be born in mind that the task of feeding the lambs and sheep was not exclusively entrusted to Peter, as Romanists assert; it was the mission assigned to all as shown in Matthew 18:18; 28:18-20 and John 20:21-23, and as the disciples also practiced in their oral and written instructions. In other words, Christ did not give Peter any special commitment that was not also conferred upon all apostles. Not even this passage, therefore, can be used by our Catholic friends as a proof in behalf of the alleged primacy of Peter and, consequently, of the Roman see.

### **PETER'S PRIMACY UNSCRIPTURAL**

All those who read the Bible without prejudice can scarcely believe how the Roman Catholic Church has succeeded to build up from a pre-eminence of honor, and in any case personal to Peter, a monarchical system patterned after the example of the most despotic nations in the world. And yet millions of people blindly believe in a doctrine which has no particle of evidence in the New Testament. In fact, Peter's primacy cannot be supported

Scripturally because Jesus Christ has not established in the church an office higher than that of an apostle, and even this was not transmissible any more than the office of the prophets in the Old Testament. A successor was indeed appointed to Judas because he had ceased to be an apostle; but not to James, the son of Zebedee, or to any other of the Twelve. So even accepting Peter as having exercised full leadership over his fellow-apostles and over the church, his so-called primacy would have ended at his death. However, we find in the Bible that the relations between all the apostles were on the basis of complete equality. Inspired writers and early fathers of the church, as we have already seen, never dreamed of any kind of primacy for Peter. As a matter of fact, if there was a leader in the Jerusalem church it was James, the brother of the Lord, and not Peter. Besides, in Gal. 2:9 Paul mentions James and John as being reputed pillars together with Peter whom he also withstood to the face, because he was to be blamed (2:14). Romanists say that it was a matter of discipline and, consequently, not involving the authority of Peter; but no pope today would tolerate an inferior accusing him publicly of (1) inconsistency, (2) practical calumny of Christ, (3) transgression of the law, and (4) making void the gift of God (Gal. 2:14-21). It is also evident that Paul exercised more jurisdiction upon the primitive churches than Peter or any other apostle. Furthermore, in the first century Christianity reigned with an equality and a democratic government that could not agree with papal despotism. In fact, when a successor to Judas was being selected, it was not Peter to appoint him, but the multitude of the believers by a democratic vote elected Matthias (Acts 1:15-26). Likewise the seven deacons were selected by the brethren and not appointed by a vicar of Christ (Acts 6:3). Moreover in the Jerusalem council, while James enjoyed the presidency, the final decrees in favor of the converts from the Gentiles were issued not in the name of Peter, but in the name of the apostles, of the elders, and of the brethren (Acts 15). When Paul and Barnabas returned from their first missionary journey, they did not go to see Peter, but reported directly to the church at Antioch (Acts 14:26). On Paul's return from his third journey he did not report to Peter, but went unto

"James; and all the elders were assembled" (Acts 21:18).

That there was no general recognition of Peter's I primacy in early times is also shown from Paul's statement in 1 Cor. 1:12, where one party claimed to be of Paul, one of Apollos, one of Cephas, and one of Christ. In Galatians 2:7-8 Paul implies that Peter had no jurisdiction whatever over him by saying, "When they had seen that to me was committed the gospel of the uncircumcision, as to Peter was that of the circumcision." It is clear that the authority of Peter, if he had any, was not universal, like that of the pope, but limited to the Jewish population whose center was Jerusalem, and not Rome. Finally, the most decisive arguments against Peter's primacy are the silence of Peter himself, who never seemed to realize his high position, and the not less amazing conduct of his immediate disciple Mark who, in spite of the intimate contacts and relationship that he enjoyed with the apostle, has left us no hint about the leading role played by the alleged first vicar of Christ. Can Romanists imagine a pope like Peter? If yes, they must prove why did he not know it. The crucial point of the whole issue is that neither Jesus nor the inspired writers have ever said that the church was built on Peter alone; Peter himself was plainly aware of the truth that "other foundation can no man lay, but that which is laid: which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11). Though not perfect in the flesh, Peter was never guilty of the charge of usurping the place of honor that the Holy Spirit ascribes exclusively to Christ. "And he is the head of the body, the church; who is the beginning, the firstborn from the death, and that in all things he may hold the primacy" (Col. 1:18). On the contrary, he feels equal among equals, brother among brethren, calling himself an elder and exhorting in all humility the other elders in order that they might exercise the oversight willingly without lording over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, they would receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away (1 Pet. 5:1-4).

### **PAPAL SUPREMACY, A RESULT OF TRADITION**

For this very reason Peter, not having claimed any primacy of jurisdiction for himself, could not possibly transmit to others an

authority that was not his. Consequently, the theory that all the prerogatives conferred upon Peter were not to cease at his death but were to be handed down to his successors from generation to generation, is without foundation. Even admitting that Peter resided in Rome and ordained a plurality of elders, as was the custom of the churches of Christ everywhere, it can not follow that only one was elected pope. In this respect, the testimony of Clement, supposed to have been the fourth Roman bishop from Peter, is unquestionable. Writing to the Corinthians, in fact, at the close of the first century he clearly implies that the church at Rome, as well as that at Corinth, had still a plurality of bishops. The truth is that the supremacy of the popes can in no way be derived from a humble and peaceful apostle like Peter. It is instead a result of tradition originated and developed little by little by the ambition of the later bishops of the capital of the empire. As early as the second century the church of Rome began to put forward unprecedented claims to a certain superiority among other churches; claims which were favored by various circumstances. First of all, the Roman church itself had, from the first, been associated with that severer type of Christian belief which had its chief seat at Jerusalem; and, after the holy city and its temple were alike razed to the ground by Titus (70 A. D. ), much of the reverence which had belonged to Jerusalem was transferred to Rome. Besides, Rome was the most powerful center of attraction for all Christians as having been illustrated by the preaching and martyrdom of Paul and perhaps of Peter. But the circumstance that was most conducive to the acceptance of the papal pretensions was the creation of a new office in the ecclesiastical organization, that of the metropolitan. The chief cities or metropoleis of the several Roman provinces were from the first selected as the seats of the principal Christian churches — Rome, Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus, and Thessalonica respectively representing the chief ecclesiastical centers of Italy, Syria, Achaia, Asia and Macedonia. In this manner we are able to understand how the bishop of Rome successively assumed the more extended authority of a metropolitan (325) and, later on, also the authority of a patriarch (345).

But no external event exercised a more potent influence on the

early history of the Roman Church than the removal of the seat of imperial power to Constantinople (330). For more than a century from that event it was not a little doubtful whether the patriarch of "Nova Roma" (New Rome) might not succeed in asserting an authority to which even the Western pontiff might be compelled to defer. It became accordingly an object of primary importance with the latter to dissociate as far as possible in the mind of Christendom the notion of an ecclesiastical supremacy derived, like that at Constantinople, mainly from the political importance of the capital from the conception of that supremacy which he himself claimed as the representative of the inalienable authority and privileges conferred on Peter and his successors. From henceforth it was the key-note to the utterances of the Roman primate that his supremacy, as a tradition from apostolic times, could never depart from him and his successors, and that, as representing the authority of the two chief apostles, it had claims upon the obedience and reverence of the whole Christian church such as no other apostolic see could produce. To the ultimate assertion of these pretensions the long and fierce struggle carried on between the followers of Arius and the supporters of orthodoxy materially contributed. The appeal to the arbitration of Rome, preferred both by Athanasius and by the Arian party, placed Julius I (337-352) in the proud position of the recognized protector of the orthodox faith. In the year 339 Athanasius himself visited the Western capital and resided there for three years. His presence and exhortation confirmed the Roman pontiff still further in his policy; and from this time we perceive the see of Rome assuming, more distinctly than before, the right to define doctrine and the function of maintaining the true standard of faith amid the numerous heresies that were then troubling the church.

Furthermore, with the division of the empire in the year 395 the authority of the bishop of Rome became more and more firmly established, so that it was rather easy for a man of the caliber of Leo I (440-461) to set forth in its definite form the totalitarian system of papal supremacy. With the help of the emperor Valentinian III, who uttered an edict proclaiming the Roman see a supreme court of appeal for all the bishops, Leo succeeded to place

the primacy of Rome upon a triple basis—the merits of Peter, the majesty of the city of Rome, and the authority of a council (Chalcedon 451?). In a letter to the Illyrian bishops this energetic pope stated, "That on him as the successor of the apostle Peter on whom as the reward of his faith, the Lord had conferred the primacy of apostolic rank and on whom he had firmly grounded the universal Church, was devolved the care of all the churches, to participate in which, he intended his colleagues, the other bishops." With such a peremptory declaration the destiny of Christianity was sealed forever while the papal supremacy marked the beginning of a glorious era whose forward march has not yet been stopped. (Encyclopedia Britannica, pp. 489-492)

However, it was not without opposition and struggle that the bishops of Rome succeeded in imposing their authority on the Christian world. Opposition that shows beyond doubt the human origin of the Roman Catholic claims. It can be said in all truth that the supremacy of the pope is a man-made institution, and that the same fathers quoted by Romanists in behalf of its divine origin may be cited by us to prove the contrary. In fact, here is Irenaeus who, while he seems to exalt the Roman see for its apostolic principality (*Adv. Haer.*, bk. 3, c. 3), in another notable instance repudiates the claims of the Roman bishop to dictate to the bishops of other dioceses. This was on the occasion of a sentence of excommunication pronounced by Victor I (190-202) upon certain oriental bishops on account of their refusal to celebrate Easter at a particular time. Again, we find Tertullian implicitly intimating his disapproval in his treatise *De Pudicitia* (sect. 1) of the assumption by the Roman bishop of the titles of "pontifex maximus" (supreme pontiff) and "episcopus episcoporum" (bishop of bishops); in another of his treatises (*De Virg. Velandis*, Migne, *Patrol.*, pp. 767-8), he distinctly impugns the claim made by Zephyrinus (202-218) of a certain superiority in the Roman see derived as a tradition from Peter. It was during this time that Origen, visiting Rome, uttered the famous dictum: "For if you hold that the whole church was built by God on Peter alone, what will you say concerning John, the son of thunder, and each of the other apostles?" (Migne, *Patrol. Graeca*, vol. 13, 397).

Cyprian, bishop of Carthage (246-258), while affirming the equality of bishops one with another, explicitly condemns the undue interference of the Roman bishop in the affairs of other dioceses with words such as these: "None of us has ever dared to proclaim himself bishop of bishops, forcing with tyrannical terror the obedience of his colleagues... but all are expecting the judgment of our Lord Jesus Christ, the only one who has the authority of appointing us in the government of His church, and the right of judging our actions" (Epist. 69).

Later on Jerome expressly attributed the institution of the episcopal order itself to the necessity of repressing the numerous schisms in the church, warning consequently the bishops that their office, with its involved authority over presbyters, was to be regarded rather as the result of custom and tradition than of divine appointment (Ad Tit., 1, 7). As regarding any special supremacy attached to the Roman episcopate, the evidence afforded by another passage in Jerome is not less notable. In one of his most important letters (Ad Rusticum: Migne, Patol., 22, 932) he fully recognizes the expediency and value of a central supreme authority, vested in a single individual. In support of his position he adduces examples from the animal kingdom, from the imperial power, from the military power, from the judicial power, and then goes on to say, "so again each church has its one bishop, its one arch-presbyter, its one archdeacon, every ecclesiastical grade relying on its leader," but to the clinching example derivable from the supreme pontiff himself, no reference is made. It seems, accordingly, an inevitable inference that by one of the greatest of the Latin fathers, who was also secretary of pope Damascus, writing at the close of the fourth century, the Roman theory of popedom was unrecognized. (Encyclopedia Britannica, *ibid.*)

Another remarkable evidence against papal supremacy is shown by the position of Augustine (430) who, being secretary at the Council of Carthage, enacted the following impressive decree: "Anyone who appeals to those overseas (Rome) shall not be received by the communion of the bishops of Africa." The leaders of the African church had so little respect toward the bishop of Rome as to excommunicate anyone who would have asked help of

him. These same leaders in the sixth Council of Carthage wrote to the Roman bishop, Celestine, warning him to refuse any appeal made by bishops, elders and deacons of Africa; to abstain from sending legates or commissioners to them; in a word, to refrain from introducing human pride in the church. This was an eloquent accusation against the ambition of the bishop of Rome whose pretensions of supremacy had encountered the disagreement of the greatest representatives of the Latin fathers.

But even after Leo I had succeeded to insure papal primacy over most of the churches, still no Roman bishop ever claimed the title of universal bishop until after the close of the sixth century. And when John, bishop of Constantinople, in 588 A. D. assumed for the first time this title, the presumptuous pretension was denounced by Gregory of Rome as vain, execrable, anti-Christian, blasphemous, infernal and diabolical. Writing to John he says in part: "You know it, my brother; hath not the venerable council of Chalcedon conferred the honorary title of universal upon the bishops of this apostolic See, whereof I am, by God's will, the servant? And yet none of us hath permitted this title to be given him; none has assumed this bold title, lest by assuming a special episcopate, we should seem to refuse it to all the brethren... But far from Christians be this blasphemous name by which all honor is taken from all other priests, while it is foolishly arrogated by one." And to the emperor Mauritius he writes: "I am bold to say, that whosoever adopts or affects the title of universal bishop has the pride and character of anti-Christ, and is in some manner his forerunner in this haughty quality of elevating himself above the rest of his order. And indeed both the one and the other seem to split upon the same rock; for as pride makes anti-Christ strain his pretensions upon the Godhead, so whoever is ambitious to be called the only or universal prelate, arrogates to himself a distinguished superiority, and rises, as it were, upon the ruins of the rest."

Nevertheless what Gregory condemned as a crime was accomplished two years after his death by a less scrupulous man, Boniface III, who obtained from the emperor Phocas, a most cruel and bloodthirsty tyrant, the title with the privilege of handing it

down to his successors. Thus Boniface III became the first recognized Universal Bishop of Rome and the "man of sin" predicted by Paul and the "anti-Christ" suggested by Gregory, was fully developed and revealed in the year A. D. 606. (The Bible vs. Romanism by Trice, pp. 67-68)

The above historical evidences irrefutably prove that the supremacy of the popes is far from being a divine institution; it is nothing less than a usurpation that progressed from century to century until its final affirmation as an absolute politico-religious power that is above any earthly potentate or tribunal and can be judged by God alone. That is why we urge our Catholic friends to study accurately and without prejudice the Bible and the history of the early church and they will find that Christ, and not the pope, is the Universal Bishop of all Christians, the Chief Shepherd of the whole religious flock, the only appointed and imperishable Head of the church on earth. "And (God) hath subjected all things under his feet and hath made him head over all the church." Eph. 1:22.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **INFALLIBILITY OF THE POPE**

The most important deduction that has been inferred from the doctrine of the primacy of Peter and his successors is the infallibility of the pope in matters of faith and morals. And indeed, admitting that Peter was the rock-foundation of the church and the only keeper of the keys of Christ's kingdom with supreme authority over all the faithful, it must follow that he was also divinely endowed with personal infallibility in teaching and ruling them. For it would be unthinkable that the head of an institution aimed at the salvation of souls could possibly lead them into error. Now, Roman Catholics reason that because the church was not to cease at the death of Peter, but was to continue pure and without error till the end of time, it was absolutely necessary that the same privilege of infallibility should have been transmitted to his successors, the bishops of Rome. Hence, the apparently logical conclusion that the popes in their official capacity of universal pastors and teachers of the whole church have always enjoyed

divine infallibility in defining doctrines concerning morals or revealed truths. Thus, in the Vatican Council (1870) it was made clear that the dogma of papal infallibility was not a new doctrine but rather "a tradition handed down from the beginning of Christian faith," implicitly contained in the teaching of the church up to that time, and, consequently, there was not bestowed upon the pope any new power or something given him that he did not already possess. The Vatican Council declared it to be "a dogma of divine revelation that when the Roman Pontiff speaks ex cathedra—that is, when he, using his office as shepherd and teacher of all Christians, in virtue of his apostolic authority, defines a doctrine of faith and morals to be held by the whole Church—he, by the divine assistance promised him in blessed Peter, possesses that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer was pleased to invest his Church in the definition of doctrine on faith and morals, and that, therefore, such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are irreformable in their own nature and not because of the consent of the Church." (A Catholic Dictionary, p. 267) That such a dogmatic pronouncement in behalf of papal infallibility has neither foundation in the Bible nor support from the history of the church shall be seen in the present chapter.

### **MEANING OF INFALLIBILITY**

By infallibility is understood the incapability of teaching what is false. It is a fact or quality of not being liable to err. Of course, such a privilege can be granted by God alone, because it is not in the nature of man to possess this miraculous guidance and enlightenment. Only the apostles and inspired writers were endowed by the Holy Spirit with this unique privilege of immunity from error when speaking or writing the revealed truths of God. But as soon as the New Testament was completed, the infallibility or inerrancy remained an exclusive quality of the Holy Scriptures. Therefore the pretention of the popes in being immune from error while defining doctrines concerning faith or morals is a novelty which can not be traced back to the apostolic times. It is a further step on the way of apostasy from Christ.

Roman Catholics are very sensitive about their belief in papal

infallibility, and therefore they do not like to be misrepresented in any way. Consequently, our Christian brethren must be exceedingly careful in understanding this doctrine before affording any discussion with them on this matter. First of all, they ought to know that infallibility does not mean inspiration or that the pope may receive divine revelations. Romanists freely admit that only the apostles and holy writers were endowed with the gift of inspiration. In this respect, the Vatican Council states: "For the Holy Spirit was not promised to the successors of Peter in order that they might spread abroad new doc-which He reveals, but that, under His assistance, they guard inviolably and with fidelity explain the revelation or deposit of faith handed down by the Apostles." (Sess. 4, c. 4)

Besides, infallibility does not mean that the pope is impeccable or incapable of moral wrong. As a human being he can make mistakes and commit sins and it is certainly possible for him to go to hell like any other mortal man. He must earn his way to eternal salvation, confessing his sins and overcoming the temptations of the devil in the same way the faithful are commanded to do. Father Con-way in his Question Box makes this interesting comment: "Infallibility does not mean that the Pope is incapable of committing sin. He may commit sin like any other Catholic, and he is bound like any other Catholic to use the same divine means of pardon, the Sacrament of Penance. Infallibility is not a personal, but a divine, official prerogative, given by Christ to Peter and his successors to keep them free from error in defining the content of the Gospel. Infallibility has nothing whatever to do with the personal moral character of the Pope." (p. 215)

Moreover, the inerrability of the pope does not extend to natural sciences, politics, history, or medicine. He may speak on these matters erroneously without endangering the infallibility of his office. Catholics readily admit that in certain realms outside faith and morals the popes have committed blunders. In this respect, the Roman Catholic position is stated by John B. Harney as follows: "We do not believe that the Pope is infallible, or has any special divine assistance in dealing with other branches of human knowledge, such as astronomy, geology, and physical

sciences.

"We do not believe that the Pope is infallible in discussing other questions which might have a slight bearing on religious truths, or even a direct and intimate relation with them, except under the conditions and circumstances which have been already specified.

"We do not believe that the Pope can make known new truths or proclaim new revelations.

"We do not believe that the infallibility of the Pope is due in any way, shape, or degree to himself or to any other man. It is not the product of his abilities, his studious researches, or his keen vision. Neither is it dependent on his character. A scholarly Pope is no more infallible than one whose talents are mediocre. A saint Pope is no more infallible than one whose behavior is stained with deadly sins." (The Popes, Infallible Teachers, pp. 8-9)

Furthermore, infallibility does not affect the doctrinal opinions of the pope as a private teacher even when he expounds doctrines concerning faith and morals. For instance, the commentaries on Holy Scriptures, the theological treatises, the explanations on Canon Law, the sermons to the people made by any pope are subject to criticism and error as the work of any other Catholic writer. When Benedictus XIV published his works of theology and Canon Law, he did candidly say that in writing books the popes express their own private belief without making any official pronouncement as universal judges and teachers of the church, and therefore their opinion is not binding upon the faithful.

Finally, infallibility does not allow the pope to invent a new doctrine, to break a divine law, or to alter the revealed Word of God. He is only the expounder, the official guardian of the deposit of truth, the chief interpreter of the will of God in order to insure the continuity of the church from generation to generation without change or error.

From the above explanations it clearly follows that the pope is preserved from error only in these four conditions: (1) When he speaks ex cathedra, from the chair of Peter, as supreme teacher of the universal church; (2) when he defines a doctrine, giving an absolute final decision; (3) when he treats of faith and morals,

including the whole revealed Word of God, and all truths of philosophy and facts of history which are essential to the preservation, explanation and defense of the content of revelation - v. g., the existence of substance, the fact that St. Peter was bishop of Rome, the interpretation of the Holy Scripture and the writings of the true and false teachers of the gospel; (4) when he clearly manifests his intention to bind the universal church. (American Catholic Quarterly, 1893, p. 677)

The theologians explain further that the privilege of infallibility is not a quality inherent in any person, but an assistance attached to the office, the papacy. However, such a quality is personal in the sense that it is inherited by apostolic succession from Peter, and not from the see. Besides, it is personal because it cannot be delegated to others. In a word, the dogma of papal infallibility has been defined in such a way in order to reduce to a minimum the many inconsistencies and mistakes committed by the previous popes. If difficulties arise new interpretations are invented so as to safeguard the truthfulness of the dogmatic definition. So, when Roman Congregations and two popes, Paul V and Urban VIII, were involved in the condemnation of Galileo's theory in defense of the Copernican system against the Ptolemaic, the theologians came out, saying: "We readily grant that these Congregations were wrong in condemning Galileo...and that the two Popes erred, not only as private persons, but as the heads of these Congregations, whose decrees were valueless unless approved by the Pope. But the decisions of the Congregations, even when approved by the supreme Pontiff, are not infallible, unless the Pope makes them his own, and promulgates them in his own name, with all the conditions required for an *ex cathedra* definition" (Synopsis Theologiae Dogmaticae, by Tanqueray, vol. 1, p. 496). Likewise, when Pius VII in restoring the Jesuits contradicted pope Clement XIV who suppressed them, another excuse was set forth: "Infallibility does not belong to the Pope as supreme legislator and judge in matters of discipline, but only as supreme teacher in defining doctrine to be held by the Universal Church, as explained above. He is by no means infallible, therefore, either in suppressing a religious order or in restoring it,

and so Catholics can answer that the Pope may in such I cases have erred." (Conway, Question Box, p. 225)

The truth of the matter is that whatever explanation Romanists may produce in defense of their dogma, they will always find themselves at a complete loss when asked to prove the infallibility of the pope with scriptural and historical evidences. They may write volumes upon volumes on the subject, but will never be able to answer the question why it took 1870 years to define a dogma which, they say, is clearly revealed in the Bible and fully proved by the facts of history.

### **INFALLIBILITY UNSCRIPTURAL**

Despite the efforts that Romanists have made in order to substantiate the dogma of papal infallibility with quotations from the Scripture, we may say in all truth that in the New Testament there is no hint whatever about such a doctrine. The passages usually presented are the same which were quoted for proving the primacy of Peter and his successors, namely Matthew 16:18-19, in which Christ makes the solemn promise of building his church on Peter as one of the many living stones of this spiritual house, granting him the keys of the kingdom of heaven and giving him the power of binding and loosing; Luke 22:31-32, where Jesus in view of the imminent betrayal of his most ardent disciple, prayed for the triumph of Peter's faith in time of temptation; John 21:15-17, in which our Lord charges Peter to feed his lambs and his sheep; Matthew 28:19-20, where Christ promises to be with the disciples until the end of the world; and John 14:16-17, in which Jesus says that the Holy Spirit would abide with the church forever. From such passages Catholics hastily draw the conclusion that the pope is infallible. Every one may see the falsity of a reasoning like this.

First of all, the promises made by Christ to Peter are not exclusive; Peter did not enjoy special privileges; what was promised to him was also given to all the apostles, as we have already explained in the previous chapter. We beg our Catholic friends to read Matthew 18:18 and John 20:22-23. But even in granting that Peter was endowed with special privileges, it does not follow that these have been transmitted to the popes. There is no

passage of Scripture to prove this. We do believe that Peter, his fellow-apostles and all the holy writers were infallible when speaking or writing the Word of God. They truly enjoyed the special assistance of the Holy Spirit, because entrusted with the gift of inspiration. They were laying down the foundations of Christianity and therefore they surely needed divine power in preaching, writing, and guiding the first Christian believers. But after the church was firmly established, after the New Testament was written down, why expect extraordinary means in the ordinary administration of the Word? Now the infallibility is no more in the interpreter, but in the Word itself. That is why we are commanded neither to take from it nor to add to it. Can our Catholic friends deny that through dogmatic definitions the Word of God has been substituted with human traditions? Of course they do, but without producing Scriptures to substantiate their claims.

In the Conway Question Box, p. 97, there is this typical example of Roman Catholic sophistic reasoning on the matter: "If a Protestant call the doctrine of infallibility an addition to the faith because only defined in late years, on the same principle he ought logically to call the doctrines of the divinity of Christ (defined in A. D. 325) and the divinity of the Holy Ghost (defined in A. D. 381) new doctrines." Evidently Father Conway forgot to remark that while the divinity of Christ and the Holy Ghost constitute fundamental doctrines of the New Testament, the dogma of the infallibility of the pope is not even hinted at in the Bible. Scriptural doctrines have no need of definitions but need only be reaffirmed against eventual heresiarchs, while unscriptural doctrines must have them in order to be accepted by the gullible and naive.

Furthermore, the apostles had no successors; they are still ruling the Christian world through the words of the Bible. The examples and teachings set forth by them are still in charge without exception. No one would dare to deny such an obvious thing. How, then, is it possible to affirm that the supernatural infallibility entrusted to them has been handed down to a succession of men many of whom were neither learned nor holy? Every one knows that, besides the infallibility, Peter was also endowed with the gift of inspiration and the power of working miracles; how is it that

only one of these gifts has been claimed by the popes? Could Peter possibly limit the transmission of only one of his miraculous prerogatives to his alleged successors when all were personal to him? These and other questions crowd our mind when discussing the doctrine of papal infallibility. Can our Catholic friends give us a satisfactory answer? We do not believe they can, because the Scripture not only does not support any such claim, but it is expressly said there that all men, with no exception, are liars: "But God is true and every man a liar (Rom. 3:4), while the Psalmist sang: "I said in my excess: Every man is a liar (115:11).

### **HISTORY AGAINST INFALLIBILITY**

If the Bible is silent about this supernatural prerogative claimed by the popes, the church's history shows beyond doubt that while for many centuries papal infallibility was completely unknown in Christendom, the gradual affirmation of it was never recognized as of divine institution by large sections of the Roman Catholic Church itself, and when in 1870 it was finally imposed as a dogma of faith a great number of the Vatican fathers were opposed to it, as we shall see later on.

First of all, the early history of the church, even after the successful recognition of the alleged primacy of the bishops of Rome in the fifth century, does not offer any hint about the gift of infallibility that is said to be attached to the papal office. As a matter of fact, not only is there no pope who for at least fourteen hundred years ever claimed such a divine privilege, but in many ecumenical councils, like those of Constance (1414-18) and Basel (1431-47), the very superiority of the pope above a general council was emphatically denied. By affirming that the infallibility was accorded only to the council, as the representative body of the universal church, they implicitly excluded any personal privilege resting on the pope, as head of the Christian community. This same theory was upheld till the Vatican Council by the majority of Roman Catholic bishops outside Italy, who generally followed the teaching set forth in a document called "the Gallican liberties," in which was stressed the idea that, although the pope had the principal share in questions of faith, his decrees and judgment

however were not at all irreformable without the consent of the entire church. And Febronius (1701-90), also a Roman bishop, more radically than the others maintained "that the power of the keys was lodged in the whole body of the faithful, though it was to be exercised by the clergy; that every bishop had unlimited power of dispensation, condemnation of heresy, administration, etc. in his own diocese; that the Holy See was not superior to the rest of the bishops as a body or to a general council; and that the bishops should restrain the activity of the Holy See." (A Catholic Dictionary, p. 202)

It is correct to say, therefore, that papal infallibility can not be traced back to apostolic or subapostolic times, as Romanists claim, it being one of the latest products to come out from that enormous forge of human doctrines which is the Vatican See.

1. Neither can papal infallibility be proved by examining the very actions and doctrinal pronouncements of many popes. Though Catholics say that infallibility has nothing to do with papal decisions unless made *ex cathedra*, yet it cannot be denied that in showing the contradictions and errors in which the popes have fallen down through the ages the cause of infallibility is obviously weakened if not completely nullified. And indeed we cannot understand how the popes may still be considered infallible when publicly erring in matters of doctrine, faith, morals and discipline. The explanations given by Romanists in such cases are not at all convincing. Here are some of many instances of papal fallibility that we derive from Roman Catholic sources:

Pope Victor (190-202) while in a previous decree approving the heresy of Montanism in another one condemned it.

Pope Marcellinus (292-303) was a public idolator, entering the temple of Vesta and offering incense to the goddess. To the excuse that it was an act of weakness it may well be answered that a true vicar of Christ would have rather died than become an apostate.

Pope Liberius (352-366) approved of the condemnation of St. Athanasius, the opponent of Arianism, by Arian bishops, and he himself subscribed a semi-Arian profession of faith in order to be called back from exile and restored to his see.

Pope Gelasius (492-96) made a dictum concerning the Lord's

Supper which is in striking contrast with the later decree of the Council of Trent. He affirmed that while the sacrament of the body and blood of our Lord is indeed a divine thing, "nevertheless the substance or nature of the bread and wine cease not to exist." On the contrary, the Trent fathers proclaimed as a dogma of faith that "by the consecration of the bread and wine, the whole substance of the bread is converted into the substance of the body of Christ, and the whole substance of the wine is converted into the substance of his blood; which conversion is suitably and properly called by the Catholic Church, Transubstantiation."

Pope Gregory I (590-604) called antichrist whoever would have taken the title of Universal Bishop, while Boniface III (607-8) obtained such a title from the parricide emperor Phocas for himself and his successors. The same Gregory forbade any priest to celebrate mass alone, "for there ought to be present," he says, "some to whom he may speak, and who, in like manner, ought to answer him, and he must withal, remember that saying of Christ, 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name I will be present with them' " (Liber Capitularis, c. 7). However, the Council of Trent, in the canon 8, Sess. 22, declared, in open contradiction to this earlier decision, that "if anyone shall say that private masses, in which the priest alone doth sacramentally communicate, are unlawful, and, therefore, ought to be abrogated, let him be accursed."

Pope Honorius (625-38) adhered to the heresy of Monothelism when, writing to Sergios, patriarch of Constantinople, he affirmed that "there being only one principle of action, or one direction of the will in Christ, therefore there must be one will also." For this reason he was anathematized in the sixth ecumenical Council (3 Constantinople, 680-1).

Pope Hadrian II (867-72) declared civil marriages to be valid, while Pius VII (1823) condemned them as being invalid.

Pope Paschal II (1099-1118), who in the earlier years of his pontificate instigated the cruel and unnatural revolt of the young prince Henry (afterwards the emperor Henry V) against his own father, "was reduced to the degrading necessity of being disclaimed by the clergy, of being forced to retract his own impeccable

decrees, of being taunted in his own day with heresy, and abandoned as a feeble traitor to the rights of the church" (Milman, Hist. of Latin Christ). He, and later on Eugenius III (1145-53), condemned the duel as sinful which was instead allowed by Julius II (1509) and Pius IV (1560).

Pope Clement XIV (1769-74) suppressed the Jesuits with a public and solemn document (Dominus and Re-demptor Noster) for "its restlessness of spirit and audacity of action," while Pius VII restored them again in the Church.

Pope Sixtus V (1585-90) published an edition of the Bible recommending its reading in a Bull (the most solemn and weighty form of papal letter), and Pius VII condemned the reading of it.

Pius XII, after having promulgated two infallible pronouncements in the field of morals, one on the question of the Rotary Club on January 11, 1951, and the other on Birth Control on October 29, 1951, had to retract them because of the unfavorable reaction stirred up at the hand of the American Roman Catholic clergy and laity.

These are the historical facts that show beyond all reasonable doubt the little reliability of papal infallibility. How can our Catholic friends be sure of the seriousness of their dogma when founded on such enormously controversial foundations?

2. But the cause of infallibility becomes further shaken if we consider the moral character of quite a few popes. The reason that infallibility does not require either impeccability or goodness of life is not enough to solve such a grave problem. Romanists cannot easily dissociate the alleged Sacredness of the papal office from the unspeakable corruption that has crept into it at the hand of its unworthy officers. The example of Judas in the apostolic college is not fitting, because he neither received the Holy Spirit nor was made "custodian of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, infallible interpreter of God's holy Word and Christ's vicegerent on earth." We cannot see how the gift of infallibility could possibly abide in the souls of such monsters like those recorded in the history of the popes. These so-called holy links in the unbroken chain of papal succession are nothing less than common criminals and as such should be considered. Would it not be offensive to the sanctity of

the Holy Spirit to admit that He gave assistance and guidance to such execrable popes? And yet Romanists, because of the dogma of infallibility, are compelled to accept and defend such an absurdity. But let us see a few horrible facts available in any book of Roman Catholic history:

Pope Vigilius (540-55), the nominee of Theodora and her pliant slave, bought the papacy from Belisarius, general of the emperor Justinian, becoming a mere vassal of the courtisans on the imperial throne. However, he was unfaithful to the promise and refused to pay. The historians say that under him "the papal office was dishonoured as it had never been before, at once by the signal unworthiness of its bearer and by the indignities heaped upon him by the savage malice of his foes." (Encyclop. Britannica, vol. 19, p. 493)

Pope John VIII (872-82) was indeed a monster of blood and cruelty. "He commended the unnatural barbarity of Athanasius, bishop of Naples, who put out the eyes of his own brother, Sergius, duke of the same city, and sent him in that state to the pope, to answer to a charge of rebellion against the Holy See." (Hist. of Romanism, by Bowling, p. 217)

Pope Stephen VI (VII? 896-97) is remembered only for the inhuman manner in which he treated the lifeless corpse of his predecessor Formosus. As Platina relates the pope rescinded the acts of Formosus, compelled those ordained by him to be reordained, dragged his dead body from the tomb, beheaded him, as though he were alive and then threw him into the Tiber. Writing about him, Baronius comments at his death: "Thus perished this villanous man who entered the sheepfold as a thief and a robber; and who in the retribution of God, ended his days by the infamous death of the halter." (Annales, vol. x, p. 742)

Pope Sergius III (904-11) cohabited with the notorious prostitute Marozia and her daughter, having a son by the first who became, later on, pope through the influence of his licentious mother.

Pope John X (915), lover of the courtesan Theodora, was raised to the papacy by her intrigues.

Pope John XI (931), bastard son of Sergius III and Marozia,

was such an infamous vicar of Christ that Baronius was forced to exclaim in his *Annales*: "The Holy Roman Church has been vilely corrupted by a monster like him. "

Pope John XII (955-63), was one of the worst pontiffs ever to ascend the papal throne; because of his wickednesses, tyranny and debauchery he was summoned to appear before a council in order to meet the accusations brought against him by the Roman people, and having failed to appear, was formally deposed.

Pope Benedict IX (1033-45), a lad scarcely twelve years of age, was brought to the office by the counts of Tusculum through whom for nearly half a century the popedom became a mere apanage in their family. Benedict soon threw off even the external decencies of his office, and his pontificate was disgraced by every conceivable excess. As he grew to manhood his rule in conjunction with that of his brother, who was appointed the patrician prefect of the city, resembled that of two bandits. The scandal attaching to his administration culminated when it was known that, in order to win the hand of a lady for whom he had conceived a passion, he had sold the pontifical office itself to another member of the Tusculan house, John, the arch-presbyter, who took the name of Gregory VI. (*Encyclop. Brit.*, vol. 19, p. 497)

The moral degradation and degeneracy of the Roman see during a period of two hundred years is so revolting that Cardinal Baronius in his *Annales* exclaim horrified: "Oh! what was then the face of the Holy Roman Church! how filthy, when the vilest and most powerful prostitutes ruled in the court of Rome! by whose arbitrary sway dioceses were made and unmade, bishops were consecrated, and which is inexpressibly horrible to be mentioned false popes, their paramours, were thrust into the chair of St. Peter, who, in being numbered as popes, serve no purpose except to fill up the catalogues of the popes of Rome. For who can say that persons thrust into the popedom without any law by harlots of this sort, were legitimate popes of Rome? In this manner lust supported by secular power, excited to frenzy, in the rage for domination, ruled in all things." (Quoted from *Hist. of Romanism* by Dowling, p. 219)

But even after this indescribable age there have been several

popes unworthy of their office. They have committed every kind of crime from poisoning to adultery, from concubinage to simony, from robbery to sacrilege. Here is Eugenius III (1145) who imitated pope Vigilius in buying the papal chair and to whom St. Bernard dared to say: "Can you show me in this great city of Rome anyone who recognizes you pope that did not receive gold or silver?" Here is John XXIII (1410-15), the notorious Balthasar Cossa, who poisoned his predecessor Alexander V, and because of his crime of immorality and simony was deposed by the Council of Constance. Here is Alexander VI (1492), elected through bribery and whose papal record is one of the most infamous of all. Among his debaucheries he is said to have been the lover of his daughter Lucrezia, while from the Roman matron Vanozia he is said to have acknowledged five children, among whom Cardinal Caesar Borgia, not unworthy son of such a father. But it would be too long to mention all the wickednesses and depravations committed by the so-called vicars of Jesus Christ, these few should suffice for our Catholic friends to see the incompatibility and absurdity of the claim of papal infallibility. They may read the History of the Popes by the renowned Catholic historian Ludwig Pastor, and find out for themselves the truth about their most holy fathers. They will learn also that the divine gift of infallibility could not have been bestowed upon such sinful men without involving irreverence and disrespect for that true church of Jesus Christ, of which they are said to have been visible heads.

3. Furthermore, papal infallibility can not be substantiated by an unbroken line of popes, beginning from Peter till the Vatican Council when that doctrine was officially defined as a dogma of faith, because Romanists have not succeeded to join together the missing links of the chain. There are many contradictions in the official lists of the popes produced by Catholic authorities, and in those lists are included many antipopes in order to link the gaps of the broken line. For instance, Benedict V (964) and Boniface VII (984) were antipopes and their names stand in the official lists of the bishops of Rome. The early records about them extant in the works of Ireneus, Eusebius, in the Catalogus (list) Liberianus (366), Catalogus Felicianus (530), and above all in the Liber

Pontificalis (book of the popes) are so inaccurate and confused that Clement, for example, is placed by one source right after Peter, and by another one in the third and even fourth place from him. For this reason Donald Attwater in his Catholic Dictionary, p. 548, before listing the bishops of Rome, is forced to make the following remark: "There are some discrepancies in the lists of the popes, owing to conflicting records and the uncertain status of certain Pontiffs; the following is an attempt to record historical probabilities. Family names, when known are given in brackets, and the date of accession follows. The dates up to the third century are extremely uncertain."

Besides, there have been popes who, even though canonically elected, were afterwards substituted by force with others who did not have reasonable claims to the office, and, consequently, lost their place in the list. Such was the case of Anacletus II (1134) in the struggle that arose between him and Innocent II, who was brought to the Roman see by the imperial forces of Lothair, although technically, at least, Anacletus had the better claim to the papacy, having been elected by a majority of Cardinals.

Moreover, during the many schisms that troubled the Roman see, very often two or three popes occupied at the same time the papal chair and Catholics themselves do not know who was the infallible one during those disgraceful periods. Thus we have the absurd situation of seeing the faithful divided in the obedience to one or the other pope or antipope and the Church without any infallible head, which for Catholics is inadmissible. Especially in the Great Schism of the West, which lasted from 1378 to 1417, Christian Europe was scandalized by the contentions of the two rival popes, the one (Urban VI) holding his court at Rome, the other (Clement VII) at Geneva, each hurling anathemas, excommunications, and the foulest accusations at the other, and compared by Wyclif to "two dogs snarling over a bone." The confusion was so great that even Roman Catholic saints, like Catherine of Siena and Vincent Ferrer, were misled and put one against the other. In the meantime isolated scholars and divines throughout Europe, among the regular and the secular clergy alike, were pondering deeply the lesson taught by the papal history of the

last six centuries, and in the place of the traditional theories of appeals to popes, to councils, or to emperors there was growing up another conception, that of the essential falsity of the axioms on which the theory of the papal supremacy and infallibility had been built up, and of Scriptural authority as the only sure and final source of guidance in deciding upon questions of doctrine and morality. Such ideas, although not yet ready to be accepted by the popular mind of the time, found later on their natural outlet in the great Reformation which freed many peoples from unbearable ecclesiastical tyranny and ambitious usurpers. This is also the right conclusion that our Catholic friends should be able to reach in their unprejudiced inquiry of unscriptural papal claims. And we really wish they will.

### **INFALLIBILITY AND THE VATICAN COUNCIL**

But papal infallibility appears far more an ecclesiastical imposition than a mere traditional doctrine from examining the history of the Vatican Council itself, where such a tenet was finally defined to be an article of the Catholic faith. Although this Council, assembled in Rome on Dec. 8, 1869, was more deserving of the name of "ecumenical" than any other which had before obeyed the behest of emperor or pope, being attended by delegates from nearly all parts of the world, yet, as a representative body, it was very unequally composed, because the numerous holders of the Italian bishoprics (many of which are of but small extent) constituted a large majority of the entire number. A proposal to rectify this practical inequality by dividing the whole Council into eight or six sections representing national elements was summarily rejected. On the other hand, the superiority of the minority (those opposed to infallibility) in learning and reputation was obvious. It included such names as Schwarzenbey, Mathieu, Darboy, Rauscher, Simor, Ginoulhiac, MacHale, Dupanloup, Ketteler, Strossmayer, Clifford, Kenrick, Maret, and Hefele; while in the long list of those who eventually recorded their placets in favour of the new decree scarcely a name of real eminence appears. Dr. Dollinger, the foremost scholar of Catholic Germany, was not among the "fathers" of the Council, but his disapproval of the new

dogma was notorious, as also was that of the Comte de Montalembert in France. In order to make sure the triumph of the infallibilists pope Pius IX, a few days before the opening, issued a brief *Multipliciter inter*, prescribing the mode of conciliar procedure and effectually fettering the Council from the outset, so that it had never even the shadow of freedom which ostensibly was allowed to the Tridentine Synod. After protracted sittings, extending over seven months, and characterized mainly by a series of discreditable maneuvers designed to break the firm phalanx of the minority, who could only record their protests and utter eloquent remonstrances, the Constitution (as it was termed) was finally laid before the Council. This Constitution ( now usually cited as *Pastor Aeternus*) asserted the following propositions:

1. "That a proper primacy of jurisdiction over the whole Church was conferred upon Peter directly and singly, and not mediately through any delegation to him, as chief minister in the Church, of a primacy held by the Church corporately.

2. "That this Petrine primacy vests by divine institution and right in the line of Roman Pontiffs.

3. "That the pope's jurisdiction is immediate in all churches — that is, he is the universal ordinary, the actual bishop of every see (all other bishops being merely his curates and deputies), and is not a remote or merely appellate authority - so that in questions not of faith and morals alone, but of discipline and government also, all the faithful, of whatever rite or dignity, both pastors and laity, are bound, individually and collectively, to submit themselves thereto.

4. "That it is unlawful to appeal from the judgment of the Roman Pontiffs to an ecumenical council, as though to a higher authority.

5. "That the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra*, and defines a doctrine of faith or morals to be held by the Universal Church, is infallible, and such definitions are accordingly irreformable of themselves, and not from the consent of the Church."

This document was voted upon in the congregation of 13th July, 1870, consisting of 671 members. Of these 451 voted in the affirmative; 88 voted against it; 62 voted *placet juxta modum*,

meaning that they would accept it if it were seriously modified; and 70 did not vote at all. Now, by the canonical theory of councils such a division of opinion as this voided the decision of the majority, and made it null. For, while a bare majority in a council suffices to pass a mere disciplinary canon, being a variable matter, contrariwise, to enact a dogmatic decree requires practical unanimity, since nothing can be imposed as of faith for which the two attesting notes of universal prevalence and historical continuity cannot be adduced. And, as the dissent of any appreciable number denotes that they do not know it as the local tradition of their several dioceses, it thereby destroys the claim to these notes. Not only so; but in view of the character in which bishops appear at councils, as representing their laity, it is clear that the size and population of their several dioceses have to be taken into account when estimating the weight attached to their individual testimony as to the reception of any dogma within their jurisdictions. Tried by this standard, the opposition was very much more Important than its muster-roll seems to indicate, for it included the bishops from many of the most populous Roman Catholic dioceses, such as the archbishop of Paris, with 2,000,000 Catholics, Breslau with 1,700,000, Cologne with 1,400,000, Vienna with about the same number, and Cambrai with 1,300,000; whereas 62 bishops of the Papal States, for example, represented no more than 700,000 altogether, apart from the hundred and more titulars who had no flocks at all. This matter may be summed up thus: every vote cast for the new dogma stood for 142,570 folks; but every vote cast against it stood for 492,520. Nor is this all: a council claiming to be ecumenical must speak with the consent of both East and West. But, even if the very large concession be made that the Uniat churches in communion with Rome are in truth the lawful representatives of the Ancient Oriental Church, the fact remains that the number and rank of the Orientals in the minority was such as to make the vote at best only a Latin one. So, in any way the voting was neither fair nor in accordance with the general rules of the councils.

Immediately after this preliminary voting, nearly all the bishops of the minority abruptly quitted Rome, after previously

discharging a protest against the proceedings. But they were given to understand that each of them would have two papers tendered to him for his signature in the ensuing session, one being a profession of adherence to the infallibility dogma, the other a resignation of his diocese in case he refused such adherence. And they had good reason to think that the pope, who had declared that he meant to be proclaimed infallible "without limitation," and had shown open enmity to more than one of their number, would employ direct coercion in the event of continued resistance, bringing his temporal power as sovereign of Rome to bear on the rebels within his territory. Accordingly, when the public session was held on 18th July, 1870, while 535 bishops voted for the Constitution Pastor Aeternus, only two, those of Ajaccio and of Little Rock, Ark., remained to utter their "non placet." The pope thereupon confirmed the decree, and the new dogma was definitely sanctioned. (Encyclop. Brit., vol. 17, p. 734; vol. 24, p. 112)

Such an unprecedented imposition that annihilated the independence of the episcopate, abrogated the teaching and attesting functions of the dispersive church, and contracted the Roman Catholic creed into the single article of belief in the pope, was to be discounted very soon with the secession of many great scholars and universities from the jurisdiction of Rome, who constituted another branch of Christendom, the Old Catholic Church. And indeed if it were not for the ignorance and indifference of the faithful on religious matters, it is certain that the Roman Catholic Church would have perhaps witnessed its greatest schism. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the definition of papal infallibility was imposed by "an aggressive, insolent faction," headed by the Jesuits and the Roman Curia with the result of "forcing consciences in the service of an unchristian tyranny, of reducing many pious and upright men to distress and want, and of persecuting those who had but stood steadfast in their allegiance to the ancient faith." (Protest of the German Bishops). It seems strange that by one of the most singular ironies of history two months after the proclamation of this autocratic dogma there was effected the overthrow of the temporal power of the papacy and the occupation of Rome by the troops of the king of Italy. This is a

subject which calls for serious meditation on the part of our Catholic friends who still believe in the divine institution of the dogma of infallibility.

### **INFALLIBILITY, A CONTRADICTION DOCTRINE**

Finally, papal infallibility is a contradictory doctrine, because instead of being an aid for the preservation of the truth, as said to be, it has been used in order to justify human tradition with biblical misinterpretations. Before and after the definition of the dogma, the popes of Rome, alone or through the councils, have imposed upon the faithful doctrines which have not the slightest support in the Scripture. And yet, in the Vatican Council the fathers proclaimed with unquestionable terms that "the Holy Spirit was not promised to the successors of St. Peter that they might make a new doctrine, but that by His assistance they might religiously guard and faithfully expound the revelation of the Deposit of faith which has been handed down from the apostles."

That such a declaration has been contradicted by the facts is known to every one who has some familiarity with the so-called dogmatic pronouncements of the Roman Catholic Church. Take, for instance, the dogma of purgatory, and you will be surprised at the lack of scriptural passages required to substantiate an article of faith. Not only is there no hint in the New Testament as to allow such a belief, but the sole text produced from the Old Testament is an apocryphal one, besides being in contradiction with the doctrine of purgatory itself. Take the dogma of indulgences, and you will remain astonished at the complete absence of quotations from the Bible in support of such a doctrine. Take Mary's perpetual virginity, and you will discover that it is in open contradiction with many passages of the Scripture in which the mother of Jesus is shown as having other children besides Him. Take Mary's Immaculate Conception, and the misinterpretation of Genesis 3:15 and Luke 1:28 is self-evident. Take even the dogma of papal infallibility, and you will observe that neither Scripture nor the early history of the church has been offered for the definition of the doctrine. Take, finally, the bodily Assumption of Mary into heaven, and the Roman Catholic sources will candidly confess that the

dogma has neither foundation in the Bible nor support from history in the first five to six hundred years of Christianity. Is it not logical therefore to conclude that papal infallibility is really and truly a contradictory doctrine whose practice each time has defiled the affirmation uttered in the Vatican Council? And if this is true, how can our Catholic friends continue to uphold a church whose main interest has been devoted to strengthen the totalitarian position of the pope rather than the practice of the revealed truths of the gospel?

It is in view of this consideration that we invite all people of good understanding and keen love for God's Word to revise their present belief in the light of the New Testament teaching in order to free themselves from eventual errors and courageously accept the truth as a pledge and a certainty of eternal salvation. Only in this way may they really honor the Holy Spirit and be assured of His assistance during their sincere investigation of the Scriptures. Would to God that each one of them could merit the praise uttered by Luke in behalf of the Bereans: "Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica) who received the word with all eagerness, daily searching the scriptures, whether these things were so." Acts 17:11.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **THE PRIESTHOOD OF THE ROMAN CHURCH**

In the Roman Catholic system the priesthood plays a very important and decisive role. It may well be said that it constitutes the vital and central artery of that authoritarian organization and can be rightly compared with the blood system of any animal organism. Without a powerful priesthood, in fact, there would be no possibility of controlling such a large number of faithful disseminated through the four corners of the earth, and, consequently, the whole structure of Romanism would be lacking the necessary directives coming down from the head, the pope. It is through the priests that the perimeter is tightly connected to the center, forming a monolithic, undisputed "Church-ocracy" that has no rival either in political or religious institutions. The pope stands

for an absolute monarch while his army of priests—perhaps 850,000—represents his working nobility who help him in the arbitrary government of 400 million believers. So we may affirm that in the totalitarian scheme of Roman Catholicism the Church is in a true sense the clergy, and the people must follow the hierarchy—from the pope to the least priest—with unquestioning obedience. The priests are at the side of their subjects in all stages of their lives, ministering unto them from the dawn of their existence to the close of their days. In this manner, they can control every action that in any way is related to the spiritual welfare of the faithful whose salvation is insured by the mediatory performances of the formers. In an encyclical letter to the priests of the Roman Catholic Church, pope Pius XI presents the birth to death functions of the priesthood as follows:

"The Christian, at almost every important stage of his mortal career, finds at his side the priest with power received from God, in the act of communicating or increasing that grace which is the supernatural life of his soul.

"Scarcely is he born before the priest, baptizing him, brings him a new birth to a more noble and precious life, a supernatural life, and makes him a son of God and of the Church of Jesus Christ.

"To strengthen him to fight bravely in spiritual combats, a priest invested with special dignity makes him a soldier of Christ by holy Chrism.<sup>1</sup>

"Then as soon as he is able to recognize and value the Bread of Angels, the priest gives It to him, the living and life-giving Food come down from Heaven.

"If he falls, the priest raises him up again in the name of God, and reconciles him to God with the Sacrament of Penance.

"Again, if he is called by God to found a family and to collaborate with Him in the transmission of human life throughout the world, thus increasing the number of the faithful on earth, and thereafter the ranks of the elect in Heaven, the priest is there to bless his espousals and unblemished love; and when finally, arrived at the portals of eternity, the Christian feels the need of strength and courage before presenting himself at the tribunal of

the Divine Judge, the priest with the holy Oils anoints the failing members of the sick or dying Christian, and reconsecrates and comforts him.

"Thus the priest accompanies the Christian throughout the pilgrimage of this life to the gates of Heaven. He accompanies the body to its resting place in the grave with rites and prayers of immortal life. And even beyond the threshold of eternity he follows the soul to aid it with Christian suffrages, if need there be of further purification and alleviation. Thus, from the cradle to the grave the priest is ever beside the faithful, a guide, a solace, a minister of salvation and dispenser of grace and blessing." (Ad Catholici Sacerdotii, December, 1935)

(1) Blessed olive oil mixed with balm, used in the blessing of baptismal font, at Baptism, Confirmation and the consecration of bishops. Anointing with Chrism signifies the fullness and diffusion of grace.

It is obvious that such an exalted position and dignity, in which the priesthood has been placed by Romanists in the course of time, has no foundation in the Bible, is contrary to the spirit of Christ, and is certainly a derivation from pagan and Jewish traditions. A rapid discussion on this subject should convince our Catholic friends that neither Jesus nor the apostles ever appointed in the church a privileged caste of people clothed with divine prerogatives to be handed down from one priest to another through an alleged "apostolic succession."

### **MEANING AND ORIGIN OF PRIESTHOOD**

The etymological derivation of the word "priest" is to be found in the contraction of the Greek term "presbyteros" which is translated in our language as presbyter or elder, meaning generally an aged, person with a mature understanding in knowledge, behavior and spiritual experience. Usually, it is taken to signify by most theologians a name of office in the early Christian church, already mentioned in the New Testament. But in the English version of the Bible, the presbyters of the New Testament are

called "elders" not "priests," as we find in the Catholic Vulgate. The latter name of priests is more properly reserved for ministers of pre-Christian religions, the Semitic kohanim (sing. Kohen) or the Greek iereis (sing, iereus). In this sense, a priest is one authorized or ordained to perform sacerdotal functions on behalf of the community, particularly sacrifices and other ritual acts. He stands as a mediator between the divinity and the sinful humanity for whom he exercises a divinely given power of atonement or reconciliation. Such ministers or priests existed in all the great religions of ancient civilization, and indeed a priesthood in the sense now defined is generally found, in all parts of the world, among races which have a tribal or national religion of definite character, and not merely an unorganized mass of superstitious ideas, fears, and hopes issuing in practices of sorcery.

As to the Jewish priesthood, with which we are mainly concerned here for its profound influence exercised on some sections of Christendom, it is enough to say that it was hereditary in the family of Aaron and his sons (Ex. 28:1; 40:12-15; Num. 16:40 etc.), who were referred to as the priests the Levites, in allusion to the tribe to which they belonged (Deut. 17:9-18; Josh. 3:3; etc.). Their duty was threefold: (1) to minister at the sanctuary before the Lord, (2) to teach the people the law of God, and (3) to inquire for them the divine will by Urim and Thummim (Ex. 28:30; Num. 16:40; etc.). Their functional character developed in the course of time from the judicial administration of the law, extended to the point of exacting fines for certain offences (2 Kings 12:16; Hos. 4:8; Amos 2:8), to the higher and more privileged position of being considered as the representatives and custodians of the national holiness. The sacrificial ritual of the Priestly Code is governed exactly by this principle. The holiness of Israel centers in the sanctuary, and round the sanctuary stand the priests, who alone can approach the most holy things without profanation, and who are the guardians of Israel's sanctity, partly by protecting the one meeting-place of God and men from profane contact, and partly as the mediators of the continual atoning rites by which breaches of holiness are expiated. The bases of priestly power under this system are the unity of the altar, its inaccessibility

to laymen and to the inferior ministers of the sanctuary, and the specific atoning function of the blood of priestly sacrifices.

It is precisely this evolved Hebrew priesthood that has influenced the thought and organization of Christendom throughout the centuries. In fact, the doctrine of priestly mediation and the system of priestly hierarchy, as now taught by the Roman Catholic Church, find their true origin in the priesthood of the Jews. However, the idea that presbyters and bishops are priests and the successors of the Old Testament priesthood first appears in full force in the writing of Cyprian (252), and even here it is not yet the notion of priestly mediation but that of priestly power which is insisted on. It was not until the 8th and 9th centuries that the sacrificial theory of Catholic priesthood was further developed, and this was in connection with the view that the Lord's Supper is a propitiatory sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ which only a consecrated priest can perform. When the simple ceremony of the holy Supper was supplanted step by step by a more elaborate ritual in order to fit the traditional meaning of the theological doctrine of priesthood, then the presentation of the so-called sacrifice of the mass came to be viewed as the essential priestly office, so that the early Christian presbyter was really changed into a sacerdos (priest) in the antique sense. For this reason the Reformers, in rejecting the sacrifice of the mass, deny also that there is a Christian priesthood "like the Levitical," and have either dropped the name of "priest" or use it in a quite emasculated sense. (Encyclop. Brit., vol. 19, pp. 724-30)

### **HOLY ORDERS**

The basis upon which rests the Roman Catholic priesthood is to be found in the ordination or holy orders. Only through the reception of such a sacrament men may receive the power and the grace to perform the sacred duties of bishops, priests, and other ministers of the Church. The ordination is especially necessary for the celebration and offering of the Eucharistic sacrifice of the mass which, being a public action of worship in behalf of the community, requires public appointment and consecration. The main supernatural power given to any ordained priest are: to

change the substance of the bread and wine into the substance of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, and to forgive sins in the sacrament of penance. The ordination confers a character<sup>2</sup> so that it cannot be repeated for the same grade. The minister of holy orders is a bishop, who alone has the authority of conferring the priesthood and the episcopate.

(2) The Catholic Dictionary defines character as follows: "An indelible seal or mark on the soul, really and intrinsically inherent in the soul, produced by the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders. It is a spiritual and supernatural power to receive or produce something sacred; thus the character of Order gives the power to consecrate the Eucharist." (p. 96)

In order that a man may be ordained priest in a worthy manner it is necessary (1) that he be in state of grace and have good moral character, (2) that he be at least twenty-four years of age and have proper learning, and (3) that he want to dedicate his life completely to the service of the Church.

According to the Roman Catholic Church the ordination is of divine institution and must be accepted by the faithful as an article of faith. In this respect, the Council of Trent pronounced the following decree: "If anyone says that Orders or sacred Ordination is not truly a sacrament instituted by Christ the Lord ... or that it is merely a kind of rite for choosing ministers ... or that he who has once been made priest can again become a layman: let him be anathema." (Sess. 33, can. 3-4)

The consequence of the ordination is the distinction between clergy and laity, the former being the ruling class while the latter the obedient fold. There is no participation whatever of the laity in the business of the Church. Even though through Catholic Action, Knights of Columbus, and other institutions it seems that the faithful constitute a militant class in the religious organization, yet the sharp separation remains because in the back of it all there is the controlling direction of the hierarchy. Everything connected

with religion in the Roman Catholic Church must pass through the crucible of the priests. In a Catholic Dictionary the meaning and position of the laity are clearly described in this way: "Those who have membership in the Church without authority. The distinction of clergy and laity is of divine institution, although not all grades of clergy are divinely instituted. Lay persons cannot exercise the power of Orders or jurisdiction, but they may be religious and rule their brethren in religion with dominative power, which is not jurisdiction. The laity have the right, legally enforceable, to receive from the clergy those spiritual aids to salvation due to them in accordance with ecclesiastical discipline. They are exhorted to join approved associations, and are forbidden to belong to condemned or dangerous societies. No lay association has any ecclesiastical status unless erected or at least approved by the competent ecclesiastical authority. Non-Catholics may not be members of a Catholic association which has a religious significance or implication, or which claim ecclesiastical sanction." (p. 296)

It is evident that without the leadership or at least the permission of the clergy Roman Catholics are hindered to engage in any social or religious activity. They are living under a paternal legislation that forbids them to move or to think for themselves. In every step of life they must have a priest to direct, guide, and govern them just as a father would do with children who have not yet reached the age of maturity. Trained in such a way since their childhood, they do not realize the loss of spiritual freedom and are happy that some one else has taken over the burden of their personal responsibility before the Lord. Hence, the only condition of salvation requested of the Roman Catholic laity by the priests is a blind obedience to their teachings whether they be in accordance or in contradiction with God's will as set forth in the Bible. We wonder how or what they will answer in the day of judgment when accused of having followed, during their earthly life, the commandments of men rather than the Word of God, of having obeyed a human priesthood instead of our High Priest and Savior Jesus Christ. Our Catholic friends should seriously meditate upon such a thought and see whether there is more assurance in following man-made doctrines or the revealed truths of God.

## **THE HIERARCHY AT WORK**

Under the general name of hierarchy is understood the organization of the ranks and orders of the Roman Catholic clergy divided in successive grades. The hierarchy of order embraces episcopate, priesthood and diaconate considered to be of divine institution, while the sub-diaconate and minor orders (door-keeper, lector, exorcist and acolyte) are recognized as being of ecclesiastical institution. The power attributed to the hierarchy of order is mainly concerned with ritual ceremonies, worship and administration of the sacraments, which are said to constitute the normal means of salvation and the spiritual channels for the distribution of God's blessings and graces; while the hierarchy of jurisdiction exercises the ruling power over the members of the Church. At the head of this jurisdictional organization, centered mainly in the Roman Curia, is the pope, the sacred college of cardinals (highest number seventy), twelve congregations, three tribunals and five offices. The twelve congregations which surround and assist the pope in the government and administration of the Church are nothing else but departments of the central authority and form a vast network of ecclesiastical power that is felt in every corner of the Catholic world. Presided over by cardinals, who are appointed directly by the pope, these congregations make important decisions on every matter of their competence, but these decisions require papal approval in order to become final, and "have not the force of a general law unless issued by a special papal mandate." And this means that the entire jurisdiction of the Church is centralized and tightly controlled by one person, the pope, who, besides being the Supreme Pontiff of the Catholic community, is also Patriarch of the West, Primate of Italy, Metropolitan of the Roman province and Bishop of Rome. Recognized as the true and lawful vicar of Christ, the pope has almost limitless power to do and undo whatever he wishes as long as he complies with the traditions of the Church. He is in a real sense the One Voice of God speaking from Rome. Never in the history of the world has a man been exalted and worshipped so much as the person of the pope. At his coronation ceremony, when

the cardinal-deacon puts on his head the famous tiara, he says: "Receive the threefold Crown of the Tiara, and know that Thou art the Father of Princes and Kings, the Ruler of the round Earth, and here below the Vicar of Jesus Christ, to Whom be honor and glory forever. Amen."

It was precisely for such a deification of the papal person that St. Bernard, addressing pope Eugenius II in his *De Consideratione*, exclaimed in astonishment: "I do find that St. Peter ever appeared in public loaded with and jewels, clad in silk, mounted on a white mule, surrounded by soldiers and followed by a brilliant retinue. In the glitter that environs thee, rather wouldst thou be taken for the successor of Constantine than for the successor of Peter."

Of course, the obedience due to this earthly god by his subjects, and especially by the inferior hierarchy, is absolute and constitutes one of the essential requisites for securing or holding any office. In the Constitution of the Jesuits it is admonished: "Let those who live in obedience allow themselves to be disposed of at the will of their superior like a corpse which permits one to turn and handle it any way one pleases." With such dispositions on the part of the faithful it is no wonder that everything goes on very smoothly and peacefully, and no matter what the hierarchy commands there will be always an enthusiastic response from the subjects who have been taught from their childhood that obedience to Church authority is the essence of freedom. Personal religious experience is banished by the Catholic dictionary, it being the duty of the hierarchy to do all the thinking in behalf of the faithful. Hilaire Belloc, one of the most noted British Catholic writers, expresses in this way the subjugation of the Catholic mind to the priestly guidance and direction: "The religion of the Catholic is not a mood induced by isolated personal introspection coupled with an isolated personal attempt to discover all things and the Maker of all things. It is essentially an acceptance of the religion of others; which others are the Apostolic College, the Conciliar decisions, and all that proceeds from the authoritative voice of the Church. For the Catholic, it is not he himself, it is the Church which can alone discover, decide and affirm." (*The Contrast*, p. 160)

If such is the case we would like to ask our Catholic friends

how can they be so naive as to renounce their own convictions and accept without the benefit of discussion somebody else's religion? We would also like to know from them how is it possible to perform so-called meritorious acts without proper intellectual understanding and without being aware of their own personal responsibility?

### **HONOR ACCORDED TO THE PRIESTHOOD**

Roman Catholics are used to looking at their priests with a superlative respect and veneration. They see in them the representatives of Christ and the successors of the apostles, endowed with special prerogatives derived to them through the performance of their ritual and sacramental functions, prerogatives that put them in a position superior to that of the angels. In this respect, Cardinal Gibbons states: "The exalted dignity of the Priest is derived not from the personal merits for which he may be conspicuous, but from the sublime functions which he is charged to perform. To the carnal eye the Priest looks like other men, but to the eye of faith he is exalted above the angels, because he exercises powers not given even to angels." (Faith of Our Fathers, p. 387)

Of course, in order to substantiate such a claim Romanists appeal to the Scripture quoting passages which have nothing to do with the Roman Catholic priesthood. For instance, when Paul, writing to the Corinthians, says, "For Christ therefore we are ambassadors, God, as it were, exhorting by us" (2 Cor. 5:20), he was simply stating his divine authority and inspiration, and not uttering a premise upon which is founded one of the titles given to the Roman priests. All Christians can be called in a limited sense ambassadors for Christ when preaching His holy Word. But Romanists insist that such a title is exclusive to their priesthood just as the other titles of king, shepherd, and the father are reserved for it. On the contrary, the Scripture says unmistakably that Christ is our spiritual king, because He is the only one to be called "the King of kings and the Lord of lords" (1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14; 19:16); only Jesus is our good Shepherd who gave his life for his sheep (John 10:11), while imperatively forbidding his disciples to call any man father: "And call none your father upon earth: for one

is your father, who is in heaven" (Matt. 23:9). Neither the apostles nor their disciples disobeyed this commandment of Jesus, although sometimes they addressed their beloved Christian converts as sons in the Lord. Spiritual sonship is not forbidden here, because it involves humility and submission, while religious paternity would imply superiority and pride. That is why Jesus commanded his disciples to abstain from such a boastful and vain title. How is it then that Romanists have encouraged the faithful to call their priests with appellatives such as these: Father, Reverend, Holiness, Eminence, Excellence, Monsignor, and so on? Are not they violating Christ's command in so doing? Our Catholic friends should not belittle this sort of ecclesiastical pride, but candidly confess that the Roman priests, while presuming to represent the person of Jesus Christ in their religious ministry, are not at all walking according to his example and teaching.

Likewise, when Catholics quote from the Old Testament in order to support the ever-excellent dignity and power of their priesthood, they have no better evidences to show than passages concerning the Jewish priests or Levites. But we are not living any more under the Old Law and, therefore, we do not care about the Jewish priesthood. As a matter of fact, the Acts (6:7) tell us that when "a great multitude of the priests obeyed the faith," they were happy to renounce their previous prerogatives and privileges in order to become humble servants of the Lord, just as has been experienced today by the many Roman priests, who, in forsaking their former Church, have felt exceedingly joyful and content to depose their priestly robes and titles and to be called brothers instead of fathers, becoming equals among equals in a truly Christian community.

The superstitious attitude of the Catholic people, exploited for economical reasons by the skillful hierarchy, has forced the priests almost into a class of clever magicians. They do not seem men among men, but an isolated caste of persons, obligated to celibacy, following a rigid military routine, wearing special garments, exercising peculiar and exclusive functions through which supernatural benefits are said to be purveyed upon the faithful. By such devices they can exert full control over their people, who

blindly believe that by saying certain words they may forgive sins and grant absolution, that by making the sign of the cross with their right hand upon the elements of bread and wine they may perform the astonishing Catholic miracle of transubstantiation, that by blessing certain objects and repeating certain words they may confer mysterious powers upon things. And all these actions are done with such an impressive seriousness and priestly dignity that no intelligent Catholic so far has ever doubted about their supernatural efficacy. It is hard to believe that in the twentieth century, an age of positive thinking and almost limitless enlightenment, there could still be people accepting priestly performances that clearly show unmistakable qualities of a primitive charm derived from the use of magic arts or occult power rather than from the simple gospel of Jesus Christ.

### **REVENUE OF THE PRIESTS**

The exalted position of the priests calls for an equally distinctive maintenance of the clergy. For it would be undignified that persons, who occupy such a privileged place in society, be without adequate and decorous incomes. In this respect, the Canon Law expressly forbids the clergymen to engage in any secular jobs, businesses, or manual trades in order to safeguard the high-class standard and dignity of the priestly life. The consequence is that priests, without exception, must be fully supported by the faithful who have received from their Church a special precept concerning their grave obligation to contribute to the maintenance of the priests according to their material means. Of course, the example of the apostle Paul, who worked as tent-maker while preaching in order to avoid becoming burdensome to anyone, is not very much appreciated by the Roman priests, who have excluded themselves from the obligation of contributing part of their abundant income to the Church. Only the laity is affected by such a precept and, consequently, has been given the exclusive privilege of paying for everything.

The revenues of the priests are varied according to the different customs of the people. In the European countries the secular priests are generally entitled to the so-called benefice,

which is "an ecclesiastical foundation permanently constituted, consisting of a sacred office and the right of the holder to the annual revenue from the endowment," while the religious priests (those living in monasteries or convents) receive their main income from charity. Besides this, all have right to dues or fees for masses, funerals, marriages, baptisms, and many other ecclesiastical operations. It must be born in mind that in the Roman Catholic Church the priest is paid for each step he makes in behalf of his people from the birth to the burial. Very few religious functions have been left without a fixed tax, and even for those the priest always welcomes a free donation.

As for the American priests their revenues are the highest in the Catholic world today. Even though they do not have benefices, the free-offerings given by the people and especially the high fees requested for masses and other functions are more than enough for a comfortable life. In the Eastern States of our country Catholics must usually pay for a low mass \$5, for a high mass \$15, for a solemn mass \$45, for a marriage ceremony without mass \$25, for an infant baptism \$5, for confirmation \$2, for a novena ("a prayer for some special object or occasion extended over a period of nine days") as much as \$100. And so on. One of the most profitable activities in which the priests are engaged during the ecclesiastical year is the celebration of special prayers in behalf of the souls in purgatory for whom are made exceedingly touching appeals. On All Soul's Day (November 2) any parish priest may collect a huge amount of money at the hands of devout penitents. Naturally, all this sale of spiritual aids for material goods is not called simony by official Catholic sources.

Another lucrative source of income for Roman priests is the exploitation of shrines, miraculous medals, scapulars and, above all, relics, all means in which sorcery, fetishism and superstition are mixed together. Writing on the use and abuse of shrines and relics, Monsignor John L. Bedford, Roman bishop of Brooklyn, N. Y., highly deplors the commercialism connected with them: "It is not easy," he says, "to draw the line between devotion and superstition, but there are places at home and abroad where devotions are practiced and promoted as a means to gather

money... Catholics are ashamed and non-Catholics are horrified. It is a crime to gather money—even to build a church—at such a cost to real religion... The use of relics is, of course, approved by the Church. In that use we profess unqualified faith, but we do loathe, despise and condemn the contemptible practise of applying the relic with one hand and collecting money with the other."

(Homiletic and Pastoral Review, October, 1928)

But the most disgraceful means used by the American Catholic priests in order to increase their revenues are doubtless the Church organizations for dancing, gambling and the sale of alcoholic beverages to the people, all things which Catholic moralists in Italy denounce as being occasion of sin and therefore sinful. According to Roman Catholic estimates the gambling of bingo constitutes one of the main sources of income for the Church in the United States, and the game is openly encouraged everywhere. The archbishop McNicholas of Cincinnati, Ohio, made a profit of almost \$1,500,000 for some thirty Catholic churches in 1939 out of bingo as played by 2,500,000 players. The annual income from gambling in the diocese of Newark, N. J., has been estimated at \$4,000,000. One parish in New England maintains five Catholic missionaries in the foreign field from the profit of gambling alone.

Such a shameful enterprise of the Church has disturbed the consciences of quite a few good Catholics, and Father John A. O'Brien has dared to say: "While we would not tolerate any insinuation that our schools have come under the influence of money changers, or that they are vestibules to gambling dens, as a Catholic jokingly said to me some time ago, we can scarcely escape the accusation that with lotteries, raffles, chance books, and punch boards in the hands of the children, we are developing the gambling instinct that may lead them to the pool rooms and the gambling dens in the not too distant future." (American Freedom and Catholic Power by Blanshard, pp. 36-37)

Can our Catholic friends give us any reasonable explanation for such ungodly methods of gathering ecclesiastical revenues? Can they conciliate the holiness of the church with such sinful operations? Can they deny that for the Roman Catholic hierarchy the end always justifies the means?

## **CATHOLIC PRIESTHOOD UNSCRIPTURAL**

That in the New Testament there is no room for a Catholic priesthood is a fact as clear as the light of the sunshine at noon-time. Not only is the word "priest" never applied to the officers of the early Christian congregations, but the very meaning of it has been subjected to successive and radical changes throughout the ages. None of the apostles has ever spoken of the elders or presbyters as priests even in relation to the Lord's Supper which, being viewed as a sacrificial action by Romanists, came to constitute the foundation-stone for the Catholic priesthood.<sup>3</sup> Such a title in the earliest day of the church would have been most misleading, since a "Christian priest" would have meant a Levitical priest who had become a Christian. And indeed if a special class of sacrificing priests had been appointed in the New Testament church, we should expect that the Scriptures would have given us instruction regarding the office and powers committed to them. But we find nothing of this kind in the Scriptures. In Ephesians 4:11 mention is made of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, but the offices of pope, cardinal and of a sacrificing priesthood are absolutely excluded from the Christian ministry. In no place do we find either apostles or elders offering up the sacrifice of the mass daily, as the pope and all Roman Catholic priests do today, for their own sins and for the sins of the living and the dead. On the contrary, we have the direct testimony of the apostles, that the only priesthood appointed in the Christian church is the priesthood of all believers. By baptism every Christian becomes a participator in the priesthood of Jesus Christ because, being grafted in him, he can have direct communication with him, he can go before the throne of grace without any priestly mediation. It is on this ground that Peter says: "But you are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people." 1 Pet. 2:9. And John: "(Jesus) hath made us a kingdom and priests to God and his Father." Rev. 1:6. But this new priesthood differs from the old in that Christians are called to offer up only spiritual sacrifices: "Be you also as living stones built up, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices

acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." 1 Pet. 2:5. This same thought is emphasized by the apostle Paul in Romans 12:1: "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice holy, pleasing unto God, your reasonable service."

(3) "The existence of the Christian priesthood is the outcome of the institution of the sacrifice of the Mass by Christ and of his command that this sacrifice should be repeated in his commemoration." (A Catholic Dictionary, p. 433)

Besides, there is no biblical basis for the distinction between bishops and presbyters, as advocated by Romanists. To the student of the New Testament the word "bishop" is synonymous with "presbyter," the same officer of the church being called indifferently by the one name or the other. The presbyters or elders of the Ephesian church summoned by Paul to meet him at Miletus (Acts 20:17) are in verse 28 designated by him "bishops," or "overseers," of the flock. In the pastoral epistles the words are used indifferently. Corresponding directions are given to Titus concerning the ordaining of "elders" (Tit. 1:5-7), and to Timothy for the ordination of "bishops" (1 Tim. 3:1-7), while the identity of the two is further evidenced by the use of the term "bishop" in Titus 1:7, and "elders" in 1 Timothy 3:17-19. Peter also, when exhorting the presbyters, as their "brother presbyter," to the zealous fulfillment of their charge, speaks of it as "the work of an overseer," or "bishop" (1 Pet. 5:1-2). The titles continue synonymous in the epistle of Clement of Rome (Epist. 1, 42-44). That the offices were identical in the apostolic age is also more than once asserted by St. Jerome, writing toward the close of the fourth century: "The apostle shows us plainly that presbyters and bishops are the same ... it is proved most clearly that a bishop is the same as a presbyter" (Epist. 146). The same was asserted by Chrysostom, Theodoret, and others, and may be regarded as indisputable. (Encycl. Brit., vol. 8, p. 485)

It is therefore against Scripture as well as against church

history to consider the bishops as priests of the first order with full authority over all sacraments, and the presbyters as priests of the second order with limited authority derived from the bishops, as Catholics do. The truth is that not only is there no distinction between the two, but those officials, belonging to the one and same office, namely eldership, cannot be called priests in a scriptural sense by any means.

Moreover, the officers of the early church (evangelists, elders and deacons) were always chosen by the congregation and ordained by the apostles or the college of presbyters, while the modern Roman Catholic priests are selected and ordained by the bishops under the authority of the pope. The people have been excluded from the business of the Church and constitute an inferior class with a marked distinction from the ruling clergy. Instead, the brethren of the primitive church enjoyed complete equality with the leaders of the congregation who were stewards and not despots of God's people. Such a democratic right was partly retained even in the Roman Catholic Church itself for at least eleven hundred years when the faithful still had a voice in the election of their bishops and popes, but with the appointment of the cardinals at the hands of pope Leo IX (1049-1054) the voice of the people was silenced for ever.

Furthermore, the idea of a monarchical bishop presiding over a number of congregations, forming a province or diocese, is totally foreign to the early organization of the church. Whenever elders or presbyters are mentioned in the New Testament it is always in a plural sense. There is no example whatever in the apostolic age of a one man-government. Each congregation was headed by a college of presbyters helped by deacons in the administration of the flock. Besides, we do not have any hint of authority higher than that of the local congregation. A centralized power, as extant in the Roman Church today, is unknown in the Bible. Contrariwise, the qualifications of elders and deacons (local officers of the church), as clearly shown in the pastoral letters (1 Ti. 3:1-13; Tit. 1:6-9), pre-suppose that none can hold a position higher than that of his colleagues and that none should be compelled to renounce marriage. Do the Catholic priests comply

with these qualifications?

Finally, the special garments worn by the Roman priests either in the exercise of their ministry or outside the church in their daily life, not only have no justification in the Bible but constitute another means for further distinction between them and their people. According to Catholic sources they were borrowed from pagan costumes and were taken as a sign of dignity rather than modesty, as is claimed. Romanists freely admit that for the first six hundred years there was no distinction in the dressing of elders and deacons from that of others. Today it would be a mortal sin for any priest to depose without a grave reason his religious robe. (Can. 136)

### **PRIESTHOOD OF JESUS CHRIST**

When in the New Testament the word "priest" is used in the singular it refers only to Jesus Christ, the one and only high priest ordained over the house of God (Heb. 10:21). By his incarnation Jesus presented to his Father a sacrifice of all the actions of his will and body; upon the cross, He offered his own life in supreme sacrifice, thus obtaining full atonement of all sins, becoming mediator, priest and pontiff of mankind. Hence, besides Christ, we do not need any other priest to mediate and intercede for us before the throne of the Father, for He is indeed the only priest of the New Covenant, who offered up once for all the one, all-sufficient sacrifice for the remission of the sins of the world. Christ's priesthood is therefore the one and only fundamental priesthood in the Christian church.

A sacrificing priesthood of men was indeed appointed among the Jews, but the animal sacrifices offered by the priests of the Old Testament were mere types and shadows of the one sacrifice made by Jesus and which puts an end both to the Levitical priesthood and to the law. "And the others were indeed made many priests, because by reason of death they were not suffered to continue: but this (Christ), for that he continueth for ever, hath an everlasting priesthood. Whereby he is able to save for ever them that come to God by him: always living to make intercession for us." Heb. 7:23-25. Through his sacrifice Jesus "led his people to God," not leaving

them outside as He entered the heavenly sanctuary, but taking them with him into spiritual nearness to the throne of grace. By divine right, therefore, He has been made a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, "Who needeth not daily (as the other priests) to offer sacrifices, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for he did once, in offering himself." Heb. 7:27. It is logical that such an inspired argument leaves no room for a special priesthood in the Christian church and, consequently, the Romanist claim of having a divinely instituted priesthood coming down directly from the apostles is simply childish. There are too many evidences, based both on the Scripture and upon the early history of Christianity, that exclude in the most absolute manner any priestly ministry in the primitive church. The Catholic priesthood is nothing else but a gradual evolution of foreign influences or traditions that crept little by little into the church and gave rise to the modern, privileged, authoritarian position of the Roman hierarchy. That is why we urge our Catholic friends to examine this matter, without prejudices, in the light of New Testament teaching, freeing themselves from their traditional mentality and seeing whether or not it is fair and honest to transform the elders or presbyters of apostolic institution into a sacrificing priesthood of human origin.

### **PART III**

## **OTHER TENANTS AND DOGMAS OF THE ROMAN CHURCH**

Among the many tenets and dogmas held by Roman Catholics there are some that have biblical foundation like, for instance, the so-called sacrifice of the mass developed from the Lord's Supper, while others have been introduced into the Church without any scriptural basis, being only the result of tradition or human reason. It is not our intention, however, to discuss all of them in this third part of our book, because the number of those tenets is such that it would require a full library to treat them one by one in a rather exhaustive way. Therefore, in the following chapters, we shall present only the most common ones in order that they may be used by our brethren as examples to prove the fallacy of the Roman

Catholic teachings. If we should succeed, in the course of our religious discussions, to convince our Catholic friends of the absurdity of only one of these dogmas, then we should immediately apply the principle that, in matter of faith, the commission of one error destroys the truthfulness of the entire doctrinal system, especially when the error is taught by a Church which claims the gift of infallibility. And indeed the error cannot go along with the truth and, consequently, one sole mistake could cause the loss of eternal salvation regardless of how good and holy one may be otherwise. In his letter (2:10) James affirms the very same thing when he says: "And whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all."

It is a Roman Catholic teaching that goodness is the result of the faithful acceptance of the total body of truths and virtues, while evil is produced by the disobedience of only one precept, and this is also in accordance with the Latin saying, "Bonum ex integra causa, malum ex quo-cumque defectu," which, in conclusion, means the same thing. Now, if this is true in our moral life, it must be also true in connection with our intellectual activity, because without knowledge there can be no virtue or goodness. Therefore the admission that an infallibly defined doctrine is Scripturally false should help our Catholic friends to draw the only logical conclusion that their Church cannot be the true, infallible church of Jesus Christ. In fact, it would be inconceivable to believe that the Holy Spirit has inspired a doctrine which is in open contradiction with the Word of God as revealed in the Bible. Such contradictions can be made by men, never by God. That is why Romanists have made Herculean efforts in order to substantiate all their traditional tenets with scriptural quotations. They are fully aware of the probative strength of the Word of God, and therefore want to use it even for proving untenable positions. But because in most of the cases their biblical references bear the mark of misinterpretation, our brethren must be extremely careful in separating the true interpretations from the erroneous ones. With the material that we have gathered together in the following five chapters, they should be able to dismantle the doctrinal fortress of the opposition in discussing some of the most fundamental tents of Roman

Catholicism, like purgatory, indulgences, mass, Mary's perpetual virginity, her immaculate conception, and her bodily assumption into heaven. We have tried to present these traditional dogmas in a way that we hope should make our Catholic friends, if sincere and in good faith, realize the falsity of teachings that they have learned from the mouth of their own priests. Would to God that while their mind may be opened to the truth of the gospel, their heart may accept with humility and sincerity Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **THE ROMAN DOGMA OF PURGATORY**

In the gradual development of the Roman Catholic system down through the ages, the belief in purgatory constitutes one of the most striking departures from the divine truths revealed in the Bible. Undoubtedly it came into being as a result of pagan traditions which were little by little introduced in the early church by half-converted men who failed to free themselves completely from the heritage of the old mythologies of the ancient world, concerning the life of man beyond the tomb. Imbued with the practice of praying for the repose of the souls of their ancestors, they could not understand the simplicity of the gospel message about an everlasting life for the righteous and an eternal torment for the wicked. They wanted to graft in the apostolic teaching a middle state of being, a place of purification after death which, although not mentioned in the Bible, was however taught from time immemorable by priests and philosophers and poets of heathen religions. Only in this way can be explained the invocations of the early Christians in behalf of their dead found in the catacombs; the affirmation of Tertullian that "the faithful wife will pray for the soul of her deceased husband, particularly on the anniversary day of his falling asleep" (*De Monogamia*, N. 10); the expressions of Eusebius, Cyril of Jerusalem, Ephrem, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine and others concerning the prayers of the living saints as beneficial to the souls of the dead. With such influential precedents it was natural, although not excusable, for the Roman Catholic theologians to build up later on their ponderous doctrine

on purgatory which is not only unscriptural because it is not contained in the Bible, but also unreasonable in the sense that it nullifies the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary, making void the fruit of his redemption in behalf of Christian believers.

### **MEANING OF PURGATORY**

Although the word "purgatory" is of late origin, the idea of a state of expiatory suffering for those whose goodness was not great enough for heaven and whose sins were not great enough for hell is rather old and is traceable in the most explicit terms at the close of the sixth century when Gregory I clearly spoke about that peculiar doctrine. Before that time, purgatory was designated with different names by the early fathers as, for instance, "a place of pains and tears," "a purifying fire," "a prison where the souls remain confined until they pay to the last penny all the debts due for sins," "a profound lake," "a part of hell," and so on. But since the thirteenth century the name of purgatory has prevailed.

Today, by purgatory Roman Catholics generally understand an intermediate place and state of being in which the souls of the just are purged from their sins. This place is separated from hell, which is reserved exclusively for the wicked, and from paradise, which is destined for the everlasting rest and joy of the righteous. According to A Catechism of Christian Doctrine "those are punished for a time in purgatory who die in the state of grace but are guilty of venial sin, or have not fully satisfied for the temporal punishment due to their sins. There will be no purgatory after the general judgment. Since we do not know how long individual souls are detained in purgatory, there is need for persevering prayer for the repose of the souls of all who die after reaching the use of reason, except those who are canonized or beautified by the Church. The souls in purgatory are certain of entering heaven as soon as God's justice has been fully satisfied." (p. 143)

It is clear that the whole doctrine of purgatory rests upon the alleged necessity of expiation and satisfaction of venial sins, which have never in life been remitted through an act of repentance or love or by good deeds, and of mortal or grave sins, whose guilt with its eternal punishment has indeed been removed by God after

an act of repentance but for which there is still left a debt of temporal punishment due to his justice on account of the imperfection of that repentance. (A Catholic Dictionary, p. 437)

To better understand such a doctrine it can be added that, according to Roman Catholic theologians, sin embraces two things: offence of God (guilt) and violation of justice which cannot be restored without an adequate amends (penalty). With repentance and confession the offence of God or guilt is fully remitted together with the penalty of eternal punishment, but there remains to pay for the violation of justice. There is a temporal punishment that must be satisfied in this life or in the next. Now, it is understandable that for those who did not repent before dying there is no purgatory but only hell, while for those who, although repented, had no will or time to satisfy on this earth for the temporal punishment due to their sins, will go to purgatory where they will suffer until all the debt has been paid.

As to the nature of pains suffered by "the poor souls in purgatory" besides the loss of the blissful vision of God, it is commonly believed by Romanists that they will also endure some pain of sense, inflicted probably by material fire.

### **EXISTENCE OF PURGATORY**

The Councils of Florence and Trent, after declaring that "there is a purgatory," add that "the souls detained there are helped by the prayers of the faithful and above all by the acceptable sacrifice of the Altar." (Trent, Sess. 25) Two things are stressed by the authority of the above councils, namely the existence of purgatory and the correlative dogma about the utility of praying for the dead. Naturally the dogmatic pronouncement of the Roman Church was made against the Reformers, who, denying the existence of purgatory and the efficacy of the prayers for the dead, affirmed boldly that "after the reception of the grace of justification the guilt of the penitent sinner is so remitted, and the penalty of eternal punishment so annulled, that no penalty of temporal punishment remains to be paid either in this world or in the future in purgatory before the kingdom of heaven can be opened." (Encyclop. Brit., vol. 20, p. 114)

The reasoning with which Romanists strive to prove the existence of purgatory is taken from the following passages of Scripture. In the book of Revelation 21:27 it is said that "there shall not enter into it (heaven) any thing defiled," and in Matthew 12:26 that "every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account of it in the day of judgment." Now, from what we know about human nature, it is not improper to say that many who die in the grace of God are still burdened with some imperfections or venial sins. Such people cannot possibly enjoy the beatific vision of God without an adequate purification from their sins. On the other hand, since they are not enemies of God, they can not be sent to hell. Therefore, Romanists conclude, there must exist an intermediate place and state where the righteous can be purged and cleansed from all their imperfections, so that later on they may proceed to heaven spotless and pure.

The fallacy of the above reasoning lies on the fact that before God, according to the divine revelation, there is no distinction whatsoever between venial sins and mortal sins as affirmed by the Roman Church. All sins are equally grave in the scale of the divine justice, although there can be more or less deliberateness on the part of the sinner. By true repentance all sins are washed away and there remains not any debt to be paid. The Bible speaks unmistakably about it in many passages concerning God's gracious pardon upon repented sinners. In Isaiah 1:18 He says: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." In Micah 7:19 God is said to cast sins and punishment in the bottom of the sea: "He will put away our iniquities and He will cast all our sins into the bottom of the sea." And in the first letter of John 1:9 we read: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity." The apostle with amazing clearness states that by acknowledging our sins not only do we receive complete absolution from our guilt, but also we are purged immediately from all our unrighteousness, and that is from the penalty of eternal and temporal punishment. If this were not so, how may our Roman Catholic friends explain the fact that Christ upon the cross rewarded the faith and confession of the penitent

thief with a full discharge of all his sins both as to the guilt and punishment, admitting him soon after death in the blissful enjoyment of paradise? He was a thief and a murderer and, although repented, he remained with a huge load of temporal punishment to satisfy even after receiving the grace of justification through repentance, according to the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory. How is it then that the Lord cleansed him so suddenly from the guilt and penalty of sin? Will Jesus, the righteous judge, treat all other repented sinners in a different way than that adopted with the thief? We fully disagree with them because we are told in the Bible that "there is no respect of persons with God" (Rom. 2:11), while the beloved disciple assured us that "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." 1 John 1:7.

### **APOCRYPHAL FOUNDATION**

However, in order to substantiate their spurious dogma of purgatory with a more acceptable argument, Romanists must come back to an apocryphal book of the Old Testament, because the evidences of the New Testament, even according to them, have not enough weight for proving their man-made doctrine. This book, Second Maccabees, was never considered as inspired by the Jews, and therefore excluded from the canon of their Scriptures; was never quoted in the New Testament, as generally was the Old Testament, neither by Jesus nor his disciples, and, finally, was rejected by the early Roman Catholic fathers. Among them Jerome, who translated from the original text the Romanist Vulgate and refused to translate this book on the account that it was not listed in the Jewish canon. The second book of Maccabees was added to the Roman Catholic list of sacred writing very late and only in the sixteenth century definitely recognized as inspired by the council of Trent.

Besides, the internal evidences of the book show beyond any doubt that its unknown author not only does not claim divine inspiration, but he explicitly affirms to have done a work of abridgement, summarizing in one book all the matter that Jason of Cyrene wrote in five books long before: "And all such things have been comprised in five books by Jason of Cyrene, we have

attempted to abridge in one book." 2 Macc. 2:24. The question comes naturally, "Who is the inspired writer, Jason or the abridger?" Moreover, at the close of the book the author plainly says to have written only for historical purposes, begging the readers to forgive him for any eventual imperfection or mistake they would find in his work: ". . . I also will here make an end of my narration. Which if I have done well and as it becometh the history, it is what I desired; but if not so perfectly, it must be pardoned me." 2 Macc. 15:38-39. Can we imagine an inspired writer being doubtful and confused about the truths he was supposed to proclaim in the name of God and with the infallible assistance of the Holy Spirit?

Although the Roman Church easily admits that in this book there is no direct or indirect reference to the word "purgatory," yet the doctrine of it may be deduced from the belief of Judas Maccabee and his fellow-soldiers concerning the usefulness of praying for the dead. The classical text used by Romanists on the matter is 2 Macc. 12:43-46:

"43. And making a gathering, he (Judas) sent twelve thousand drachmas of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead, thinking well and religiously concerning the resurrection.

"44. (For if he had not hoped that they that were slain should rise again, it would have seemed superfluous and vain to pray for the dead.)

"45. And because he considered that they who had fallen asleep with godliness had great grace laid up for them.

"46. It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins."

The deduction that the Roman theologians commonly draw from the above testimony is three-fold: 1) that both Judas and his comrades were convinced that the dead could be helped by prayers and sacrifices; 2) that such a practice was a general belief of the Jews which was still extant at the time of Jesus, who, although condemning many other human traditions grown on the body of the Jewish ecclesiastical code, never reprov'd this one; 3) that the dead soldiers, in whose behalf money was sent to the temple, were

not guilty of grave sin since they had fallen asleep with godliness. (Synopsis Theologiae Dogm. by Tanqueray, vol. 3, p. 798)

But evidently the theologians have missed to see the difficulties working against their own conclusion. They have overlooked the contradictions which would come up by accepting their inferences. Compelled to defend at all costs an untenable position, they have taken the text out of its context with the consequence of hiding an internal contradiction between the statement of Judas and the commandments of God which alone should destroy any alleged inspiration of the book, and another contradiction between the belief expressed in the Maccabees and the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory.

### **INTERNAL CONTRADICTION**

In order to substantiate with facts the two irreconcilable discrepancies in which Romanists have incurred, it is necessary to give the full story of Judas Maccabee by quoting the five previous verses which have been purposely omitted by the theologians from their classical text recorded above, namely 2 Macc. 12:43-46.

"38. So Judas, having gathered together his Army, came into the city of Odollam; and when the seventh day came, they purified themselves according to the custom, and kept the sabbath in the same place.

"39. And the day following, Judas came with his company to take away the bodies of them that were slain and to bury them with their kinsmen in the sepulchres of their fathers.

"40. And they found under the coats of the slain some of the donaries of the idols of Jamnia, which the law forbiddeth to the Jews: so that all plainly saw, that for this cause they were slain.

"41. Then they all blessed the just judgment of the Lord, who had discovered the things that were hidden.

"42. And so betaking themselves to prayers they besought him that the sin which has been committed might be forgotten. But the most valiant Judas exhorted the people to keep themselves from sin, forasmuch as they saw before their eyes what had happened because of the sins of those that were slain."

In Deut. 7:25 there is an explicit command of God forbidding

the Jews to appropriate for themselves the things offered to the idols: "Their graven things thou shalt burn with fire. Thou shalt not covet silver and gold of which they are made: neither shalt thou take to thee anything thereof, lest thou offend, because it is an abomination to the Lord thy God." That the transgression of such a law was a very serious and grave sin is shown from the fact that the fellow-soldiers of Judas, who committed it, were permitted by God to be slain mercilessly at the hand of the enemy, and this just judgment of the Lord was blessed by all. How is it then that in verse 45 Judas says that the same sinners died "with godliness" and "had a great grace laid up for them"? The contradiction between the two statements is such that it has been deeply felt by the Roman Catholic commentator of the Douay Version who, in the lack of a better explanation, says in a footnote: "Judas hoped that these men who died fighting for the cause of God and religion, might find mercy: either because they might be excused from mortal sin by ignorance, or might have repented of their sin, at least at their death." The embarrassment of the commentator is evident; he is forced to make hypothetical assumptions in which he himself does not believe at all. The truth of the matter is that there is an open contradiction in the quoted passages, and such a thing must absolutely exclude the divine authorship of the second book of Maccabees.

### **CONTRADICTION WITH THE DOGMA OF PURGATORY**

But not only is the above text contradiction within itself, it also contradicts the whole doctrine of purgatory. As we have seen before, the Roman Church teaches that purgatory is a place exclusively reserved for unforgiven venial sins and unexpiated temporal punishments. Hence, all those who die in mortal or grave sin are destined to hell and not to purgatory. The same Church also teaches that idolatry is such a grave sin that once, in early Christianity, it was considered to be unforgivable on earth. Now, Judas Maccabee, as said in the passage, made a sin-offering and prayers for men who were killed exactly because of this idolatry, committed by them in the unduly appropriation of the donaries or

votive offerings to idols explicitly forbidden by the law. They died, therefore, in mortal sin and, consequently, their souls went to hell and not to purgatory, according to the Roman Catholic teaching. In that case the effort to prove the existence of purgatory with the above passage is absolutely illogical. Or if those souls went to purgatory and not hell despite the mortal sin they committed and in which they certainly died, for the donaries of the idols were found under their coats after they were slain and not before, the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory as a middle state of purification only for the just, before entering heaven, crumbles down into pieces. So, Romanists find themselves on the sharp points of a terrible dilemma. In either way they are wrong. The second book of Maccabees does not help them a bit. Besides being uninspired, it is in contradiction with the Word of God and, worst of all for the Roman Church, it nullifies a doctrine which has been so cleverly built up in the course of time.

### **NEW TESTAMENT TESTIMONY**

Moreover, Romanists have no better chance to prove the existence of purgatory with some quotations taken from the New Testament. Cardinal Gibbons in fact, being aware of this, plainly says that in the New Testament the doctrine of purgatory is only insinuated but not proved. The passages most used are Matthew 12:32; 1 Cor. 3:13-15; 1 Pet. 3:18-20.

In Matthew, Jesus, condemning the obstinacy of the Pharisees who attributed the miracles of Christ, wrought by the Spirit of God, to Beelzebub, the prince of devils, says: "And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but he that shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come."

In commenting this passage, Augustine (*De Civit. Dei*, book 21, c. 13) and Gregory (*Dialog.* 4, c. 39) gather that some sins may be remitted in the world to come; and, consequently, that there is a purgatory or middle state. Such a queer interpretation became later on a common belief of the Roman Church which is exposed by Cardinal Gibbons as follows: "When our Savior declares that a sin against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven in the next life he

evidently leaves us to infer that there are some sins which will be pardoned in the life to come. Now in the next life, sin cannot be forgiven in heaven, for nothing defiled can enter there; nor can they be forgiven in hell, for out of hell there is no redemption. They must, therefore, be pardoned in the immediate state of purgatory." (Faith of Our Fathers, p. 212)

But such a deduction is both unscriptural and unreasonable. It is unscriptural because in the quoted passage there is no biblical ground to support it. The expression of Jesus about "the world to come" has nothing to do with purgatory, it is only a rhetorical figure of speech called hyperbole by which the Lord said with an exaggerated statement that the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is such an enormous sin that it cannot be forgiven anywhere. Verse 32 is but an emphatic declaration of verse 31 in which Jesus states: "Therefore I say to you: every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven, but the blasphemy of the Spirit shall not be forgiven." That this interpretation is true can be shown from the parallel passages of Mark 3:29 and Luke 12:10 in which there is no mention whatever about "the world to come."

Besides, the interpretation of Romanists is unreasonable because it is inapplicable to their doctrine of purgatory. In fact, according to them, purgatory will end at the final judgment and thus there can not be such a place in "the world to come." Moreover, the Roman Church holds that purgatory exists not for obtaining remission of sins, but as a place of payment to the last penny for "unremitted venial sins and unsatisfied temporal punishments." Finally, the same Church teaches that the blasphemy against the Son of man is such an extremely grave sin that a person dying without previously receiving remission from it is headed to hell and not to purgatory.

Another passage quoted by the Roman Church in defense of purgatory is 1 Cor. 3:13-15:

"Every man's work shall be manifest. For the day of the Lord shall declare it, because it shall be revealed in fire. And the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is. If any man's work abide, which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work burn, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be

saved, yet so as by fire." Cardinal Gibbons, commenting on this passage, offers as the unanimous voice of the fathers of Christendom the interpretation that the soul of man "will be ultimately saved, but he shall suffer, for a temporary duration, in the purifying flames of purgatory." (Ibid., p. 213)

That this is a false interpretation is evidenced by the fact that Paul does not mention the flames of purgatory as purifying the soul of man, but he simply states that the fire shall try every man's work. Now to try has a completely different meaning from to purge or purify. According to Webster's Dictionary, to try means to test or make trial of; put to proof; while to purge or purify gives the idea of cleaning, to become free from impurities both material and moral. Therefore, there is no indication or insinuation of a Roman Catholic purgatory in the quoted passage. Paul with wonderful imagery shows the different kinds of buildings put by different men on the same foundation: Jesus Christ. Their respective value will one day, on the great and final day, be determined. They will break in with the accompaniment of fire, and the fire will test the superstructures. Then two possibilities arise. One man's superstructure will stand the test, and he will be rewarded; another man's superstructure will perish, and he will have to pay, yet he will not fail of salvation, though he will only just escape the fire which has burnt up his work. (Commentary on Holy Scripture by Gore, Goudge and Guil-laume, p. 490)

The fire-imagery applies to the last day and not at all to a preceding purgatorial period as Romanists infer. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that purgatory will cease to exist at the end of the world, in the day of the final judgment. Therefore, there is an evident discrepancy between the official teaching of the Church and the interpretation given to the passage of Paul. Besides, purgatory has been stated to be only a place of purging souls and not a testing-trial for the work of God's ministers as it is in our case. The existence of purgatory cannot be proved by 1 Cor. 3:13-15. It only shows contradiction and misinterpretation on the part of Romanists who, once again, have failed to substantiate Scripturally their claim of a middle state of purification after death.

"Because Christ also died for our sins, the just for the unjust;

that he might offer us to God, being put to death indeed in the flesh, but enlivened in the spirit. In which also coming he preached to those spirits that were in prison: which had been some time incredulous, when they waited for the patience of God in the days of Noah, when the ark was a building: wherein a few, that is eight souls, were saved by water."

A footnote in the Douay Version interprets the "spirits that were in prison" as follows: "See here a proof of a third place, or middle state of souls: for these spirits in prison, to whom Christ went to preach after his death, were not in heaven; nor yet in the hell of the damned: because heaven is no prison: and Christ did not go to preach to the damned."

Although the passage in question is very difficult to understand in its true meaning, it is absolutely certain that it has nothing to do with Catholic purgatory. The main inference which the apostle intends for us to draw from it is the contrast between our sins and the victorious power of the Passion. Christ, the just par excellence, died for the unjust of all times, past, present and future. As the second Adam He had to pay for the sins of humanity since the fall of man. So, after his mission was fully accomplished, He went spiritually, that is not by a local motion, but by a special operation as God is frequently said to move in the Bible (Gen. 11:5; Hosea 5:15; and Micah 1:3), to the spirits in prison in order to show them his great victory over sin and death. By the "spirits in prison" cannot be understood the traditional limbus patrum (limbo of the Fathers), consisting in an awaiting place of rest for all the just who died before Christ's ascension, because there is no evidence of such a place in the Bible, and besides it is clearly inferred from Luke 14:22 and 23:43 that the souls of the righteous were admitted to paradise immediately after their death. It is very likely therefore that the expression of Peter refers to the ever-living Spirit of Christ, preaching to the ante-diluvians in the person of Noah who was a preacher of righteousness. In this respect, Matthew Henry in his Commentary explains the "spirits in prison" in this way: "He went and preached, by his spirit striving with them, and inspiring and enabling Enoch and Noah to plead with them. Because the hearers were dead and disembodied when the

apostle speaks of them, therefore he properly calls them spirits now in prison, not that they were in prison when Christ preached to them." At any rate, whatever Peter meant in his letter, it is true that he had not in mind the third place or middle state of souls claimed by Romanists, because the Bible says that the people in Noah's day did not believe in God, refused his divine invitation and despised his mercy, so that when they died, they could not possibly be saved because of being in mortal sin, and therefore, according to the Roman doctrine, they went straight to hell and not to purgatory, reserved exclusively for those who die in the grace of God.

### **TESTIMONY OF TRADITION**

Unable to demonstrate the existence of purgatory with reason and Scripture, Romanists base all their hope on the argument of tradition, appealing to the fathers of the church, to the ancient liturgies of the Oriental and Western Church, and, finally, to the emotional feeling of the human heart. But not even such a kind of reasoning helps them any. First of all, the fathers of the five early centuries are not always clear in their writings, having incurred many substantial errors as even Romanists must admit. Secondly, they are not unanimous in affirming the same thing, and in many instances they are in contradiction one with another. Thirdly, they never mentioned purgatory by name, and many of them, like Origen, Ambrose, Jerome, and others, believed in a temporal duration of hell, denying an eternal punishment for the wicked as contrary to the justice and mercy of God who, in the end of time, through an universal palingenesis or renovation, would restore all things in him. Surely this is not purgatory as taught by the Church of Rome.

As to the ancient liturgies of both East and West, they were of a later origin and, therefore, the practice of praying for the dead did not descend from apostolic times as Romanists claim, but was a pagan custom inherited from the contemporary heathen religions. In fact, as we have already mentioned, the belief in a place of purification after death is incredibly old. The first news about it was found in India thousands of years before the coming of Christ. The Egyptian priests taught the theory of torments after death

sixteen centuries B.C., and Babylonians, Persians, and Phoenicians believed the same. Still now Buddhist priests in their liturgies and rituals have prayers for the souls suffering in fire that have been transmitted unto them through an unbroken succession of clergymen from time immemorial. Even the great Greek philosophers, as Socrates and Plato, who lived in the fifth century B.C., fix up an amazing purgatory theory along the lines of earlier pagan mythologies. Among the Greek and Roman gods Pluto was considered to be the god of hell and purgatory. At least in ten writings of Virgil, the Latin poet, can be found a description of how dead sinners are "purged in fire." With such precedents and environments it can be easily understood how the early fathers and the ancient liturgies could introduce in the church a practice which was developed later on by Romanists into the Catholic dogma of purgatory. Exactly so it happened that the many gorgeous ceremonies were added little by little to the severe simplicity of the New Testament church. How then can a practice of the old liturgies be traced back to apostolic times? A claim such as this is not only presumptuous but even dishonest.

Neither can it be said that the doctrine of purgatory is a comfort and consolation to the deepest sentiments of the human heart. No one can see, in fact, how it is possible to be comforted and consoled by the expectation of terrible punishments with fire, tortures, and torments of all kinds soon after death. And, although such punishments are said to be temporary, yet any good Christian would be really frightened to death in thinking of the horrible place where he could be confined for an indefinite period of time before being allowed to enjoy the blissful vision of his God. This is not at all the wonderful joy experienced by the early Christians at the close of their lives; this is not at all the manifestation of the infinite mercy of God but rather the exhibition of his wrath; this is not at all the incorruptible reward promised by Jesus to the good and faithful servant: "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Matt. 25:21. Oh no, Roman Catholics shall never convince Christians that purgatory is the answer to the longings of their hearts. Their comfort and consolation do not rest upon such a dreadful place but upon the everlasting promise of joy, blessedness, and happiness of

heaven, upon the assurance of seeing face to face the mightiness and omnipotence of God. This is the kind of comfort and consolation that Christians experience at the departure of their beloved ones. They do not need to pray for them, because they believe in the unbreakable promise of God who not only forgives, but forgets our sins: "And their sins and iniquities I will remember no more." Heb. 10:17.

### **FULL SALVATION IN CHRIST**

If it would be unfair for a human tribunal to forgive a criminal the guilt of his crime and still send him to prison to expiate for it, how much more offensive to the mercy of God would be this half-measure of forgiveness. That is why Christians cannot believe that God deals with repented sinners in a way less dignified and generous than that adopted by human beings. That is why they reject purgatory as an invention of men, as a bare-faced falsehood, as one of the most gigantic frauds of all times. The dogma of purgatory cannot be proved either by reason or by Scripture, either by tradition or by appealing to the tenderest affections of human hearts. It is only an essential belief of the Roman Church because, as has been cleverly said, "the source of Catholic power is in the graveyard." Through it, in fact, the hierarchy controls the life and death of the faithful and, above all, the purse of millions of gullible and superstitious people who have been taught to give money for masses in order to relieve from the torments of purgatory their deceased relatives. On the contrary, the Word of God states with all authority that we are "not redeemed with corruptible things, as gold or silver; but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled." 1 Pet. 1:18-19. Through the expiatory oblation of himself Jesus obtained for us, once for all, full salvation, justification and sanctification, so that He is in the true meaning of the word the Lamb of God who takes away all our sins: "Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who taketh away the sin of the world." John 1:29. By faith and obedience in him we are indeed sure that our sins are washed away, and completely forgiven as to the guilt and to the penalty of temporal punishment, "because the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." 1 John

1:7. The belief in an intermediate place of purification or purgation for the just and the necessity for the living to pray for their souls would destroy the full efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ, would nullify the promises of God, who cannot lie, and, finally, would remove from the heart of Christian believers the glorious hope of an immediate and endless happiness in the triumphant kingdom of heaven. For this reason, we urge our Catholic friends to re-examine their blind acceptance of purgatory and find out by themselves, through an unprejudiced study of the Bible, if what they have learned from the Roman Catholic priests is in accordance with the infallible Word of God.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **THE DOCTRINE OF INDULGENCES**

It has been rightly remarked that in the Roman Catholic system each doctrine finds its origin in a previous one and that all are so intimately related that one can not stand separated from the other. This is especially true for the doctrine of indulgences which flows from the spurious dogma of purgatory not less naturally than a river from its source. In fact, by teaching that the prayers and devotions of the faithful may shorten the sufferings of the "poor souls in purgatory," where they are purging themselves from the stain of venial sins and unexpiated temporal punishments, the Roman Church smoothly paved the way for the acceptance of its authority in granting indulgences whose main purpose is precisely the partial or total release, under certain conditions, from the temporal punishment due to sin. As in the case of purgatory, the reason for the doctrine of indulgences is essentially based on the distinction between the guilt and the penalty of sin. While through repentance the guilt of sin is fully remitted by God, there remains a temporal punishment to be paid in this world by any satisfactory action, but if not sufficiently paid here it will be exacted till the last farthing in purgatory by sufferings and pains of different nature and degree. According to Romanists the Church has the power by divine right to remit this temporal punishment, in whole or in part, here and in purgatory, and such a remission is called an indulgence.

In A Catechism of Christian Doctrine (p. 134) indulgences are mentioned together with masses and other good works as one of the many means by which Catholics may satisfy for the temporal punishment of the dead: "The faithful on earth, through the communion of saints, can relieve the sufferings of the souls in purgatory by prayer, fasting, and other good works, by indulgences, and by having Masses offered for them."

Contrary to such a belief we must say to our Catholic friends that indulgences have no foundation in the Bible, were introduced in the Church as a result of tradition, are against God's plan of salvation and pardon, and in contradiction with many doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church itself.

### **NATURE OF INDULGENCES**

In order to avoid any kind of misrepresentation of the Roman Catholic standing on the question of indulgences, our brethren should clearly understand that indulgence does not mean a remission of sins and still less a permission to "indulge in sin," as many Protestants believe. It is rather a pardon of the temporal punishment which is granted by the Church to all those whose sins have already been forgiven by confession or because of an act of contrition. Etymologically the word "indulgence" come from the Latin *indulgeo* or *indu-licentia* which means leniency, relaxation, grace, remission or condonation. In the Canon Law it is defined as follows: "The remission before God of the temporal punishment due to those sins of which the guilt has been forgiven, either in the sacrament of Penance or because of an act of perfect contrition, granted by the competent ecclesiastical authority out of the treasury of the Church to the living by way of absolution, to the dead by way of suffrage." (c. 911)

However, although Romanists affirm that the remission of the temporal punishment does not imply any relaxation from the guilt of sin either past or future, either mortal or venial, there have been times in the Church during which indulgences were granted under the formula "*a culpa et poena*" or "*in remissionem peccatorum*" which expressions implied precisely a complete and full condonation of the guilt and penalty of sins. That this had been for

a long time the practice of the Roman Church can be proven by the fact that, later on, the council of Trent was forced to abolish all such abuses which had grown up, in the course of time, on the granting of indulgences.

According to the Roman Catholic theologians, the remission of the temporal punishment through indulgences is not only valid in the external forum,<sup>1</sup> before the Church, but also in the internal forum, before God; otherwise the Church, says Thomas Aquinas, would rather damage than help the condition of sinners who would be condemned to more grievous punishments in purgatory while believing to have been absolved from them by indulgences.

It is the teaching of the Roman Church that indulgences can be granted only by those to whom has been committed the dispensation of the so-called treasury of the Church, and that is the pope or a general council for all the Church, cardinals and bishops locally for their own subjects. By the treasury of the Church is understood "the superabundant store of the merits and satisfactions of Christ, which were beyond the needs of our salvation, to which are added the excess of merits and satisfactions of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of the Saints." It is exactly from this treasury that the Church grants indulgences. It is a kind of compensation taken out from this spiritual store of merits in order to satisfy the justice of God in the place of the temporal punishments which have been remitted to sinners through the gaining of indulgences.

### **DIFFERENT KINDS OF INDULGENCES**

By reason of effect, indulgences can be either plenary or partial; plenary indulgences remit the whole of the temporal punishment which has been incurred by a sinner according to the justice of God. Unless the contrary is stated, all plenary indulgences may be applied for the benefit of the souls, or of an individual soul, in purgatory, but the decree of its acceptance depends on the will of God, so that there is no certainty that the penalty of these souls is fully remitted. Partial indulgences remit a part of the punishment due for sin at any given moment, the proportion of such part being expressed in terms of time as, for instance, 30 days, 7 years, etc. The precise meaning of these time

periods has never been defined; their use is a relic of the former penitential discipline of the Church out of which the granting of indulgences arose and in which the time periods had their natural and practical significance. (A Catholic Dictionary, p. 266)

(1) Forum means a judicial court, and is the sphere in which the Church exercises her jurisdiction, especially her judicial authority. The forum is of two kinds: external, to deal with matters affecting the public welfare of the Church and her subjects; internal, to deal with matters which concern the private spiritual good of individuals especially in the direction of their consciences. The Church exercises her jurisdiction of the internal forum chiefly in the tribunal of Penance. (A Cath. Dictionary, p. 209)

By reason of subject, there are indulgences for the living and indulgences for the dead, namely those applicable to the "poor souls in purgatory." Indulgences are granted to the living only by way of juridical absolution and are reserved for those who are in full communion with the Church and have resorted to the sacrament of penance, in which alone, after due contrition and confession, provision is made for the remission of the graver penalty of sin. It must be born in mind that these indulgences are never absolutely gratuitous, being always conditioned to certain religious and pious practices, like prayers, fasting, alms, rosaries, medals, etc., which must be faithfully observed by the recipients in order to gain them. On the contrary, the indulgences for the dead are accorded by way of suffrage, and that is by an intercessory prayer whose efficacy depends on God's response to it due to the fact that the Church has no jurisdiction whatever on the souls in purgatory. The dead cannot gain any indulgence properly speaking, but the living are permitted by the Church to apply in behalf of the dead certain indulgences that are gained by the former. However the living are not allowed to apply indulgences for other living.

By reason of mode, indulgences can be personal, when

granted to a person or an entire community; real, when attached immediately to a material thing, like crucifixes, rosaries, medals and other images blessed by the pope personally or by his delegates; and local, if they are granted to a religious place, like churches, shrines, sanctuaries, and so on.

A special mention must be made here of the great indulgence of Jubilee, consisting in a universal plenary indulgence, or remission of all temporal punishments, granted by the Holy See with special solemnity for a definite time to all those who, "truly penitent and having confessed and communicated, shall piously visit the Basilicas of the Blessed Peter and Paul, St. John Lateran, and St. Mary Major in Rome." The Jubilee is generally associated with the Holy Year, which begins with the opening of the holy doors of the said Basilicas on the Christmas eve of the previous year and ends with the closing of the same twelve months later. The idea of a year of special celebration at fitted periods is referred to by Moses (Lev. 25:10-15). Boniface VIII was the first pope to begin the series of the Holy Years in 1300 A.D. and, after him, a year of Jubilee was celebrated in the beginning of every century. The period was later reduced from 100 years to 50, to 33, and finally to 25 by Paul II in 1475. However, since Pius XI there has been an amazing increase in the celebration of the Holy Years (5 in 28 years), and we wonder if the modern popes are more concerned about the material gifts dropped into the Vatican treasury by the visiting pilgrims rather than about the spiritual relief from temporal punishment granted to the souls of the faithful. Surely God cannot be pleased with this cryptical form of religious exploitation which once, with an old-fashioned term, was called simony.

As we may see, the Roman Church has been granting and multiplying indulgences in so many ways and in such an abundant manner that it can be hardly believed how Catholics may still be fearful about the alleged pains of purgatory, and how priests may still continue to ask money for masses and alms in behalf of the poor souls of the dead supposed to be suffering in the purgatorial fire. Surely something must be wrong with them if they do not take full advantage, while living, of an opportunity by which they may purify themselves from all temporal punishments due to their sins

in such an easy and cheap way like that of indulgences.

### **EXISTENCE OF INDULGENCES**

Roman Catholics claim that the Church has been entrusted by Christ with the power of granting indulgences to all those who, having reached the use of reasoning and being therefore capable of falling in sin, meet the specified conditions. The Council of Trent, in order to condemn, once for all, the alleged errors of the Reformers, who called indulgences pernicious and useless and denying to the Church the power of granting them, issued the following decree: "The Church being endowed by Christ of the power of granting indulgences and having exercised from time immemorable such a power divinely transmitted to her, the Holy Synod teaches and commands all Christian faithful the practice of indulgences as useful and recommended by the authority of the past Councils, condemning with anathema any contrary teaching." (De Indulgentiis, Sess. 25) The theologians say that such a power flows directly from the dogmas of the communion of saints, of the superabundant satisfaction of Christ, and from the power of the keys.

By the communion of saints is understood the unity under and in Christ of the faithful on earth (Church militant), the souls in purgatory (Church suffering) and the blessed in heaven (Church triumphant). Among all the members of this spiritual body, whose head is Christ, there exists such an intimate relationship or communion that each one shares of the merits of the other, so that the living pray to God and the blessed in behalf of the suffering, and to God in honor of the blessed; the blessed intercede with God for the suffering and the living; the holy souls pray to God and the blessed for others, while Christ intercedes continually for the living and the dead by virtue of his infinite and superabundant satisfaction merited for all. In view of this spiritual and reciprocal help indulgences may be gained by the living for themselves or applied to the souls in purgatory.

But the scriptural text upon which the Roman Church bases its power to distribute indulgences is taken from Matthew 16:19, where Christ promises to Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven:

"And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shall bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shall loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven." The same declaration was made by Christ also to the other apostles assembled together later on (Matt. 18:18). In commenting upon the quoted verse, Cardinal Gibbons states: "By these words our Saviour empowered his Church to deliver her children (if properly disposed) from every obstacle that might retard them from the kingdom of heaven. Now there are two impediments that withhold a man from the heavenly kingdom—sin and temporal punishment incurred by it. And the Church having power to remit the greater obstacle, which is sin, has power also to remove the smaller obstacle, which is the temporal punishment due on account of it." (Faith of Our Fathers, p. 376)

### **NO SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATION**

Once again we find the Roman Church making conclusions which were absolutely foreign to the mind of the Lord, whose main object was to entrust the apostles in general and Peter in particular, because of his inspired confession, with the authority to preach the gospel of grace and redemption. In the quoted passage there is no reference whatever about indulgences or the alleged authority of the Church in distributing spiritual privileges which are never mentioned in the Bible. The Roman Catholic belief that with the promise of the keys Jesus gave to Peter and to the Church an unlimited power of doing and undoing is completely false. Peter in Matthew 16:19 was only promised to become an administrator, a steward of the kingdom of heaven, which the context identifies with the Church, and as such would have a divinely recognized authority to teach and discipline the future community. When the time came for the fulfillment of his promise, Jesus made all the apostles stewards of the mysteries of God, scribes of the kingdom, entrusting everyone with power to interpret his will in the power of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 18:17-18; John 20:22). The figure of the key is rather familiar in the Scriptures and is generally used to mean power, authority, jurisdiction exercised in the name of the household or master. It never signifies an absolute or independent

power to do as one pleases. Eliakim, son of Hilkiah, is promoted instead of Shebna as the minister of the house and bears the key of the house of David (Is. 22:15-22). In Luke 12:42 our Lord speaks of the faithful and wise steward, who is to give his household their portion of food in due season, while in 11:52 He speaks of the scribes as taking away the key of knowledge and, consequently, shutting the kingdom of heaven against men (Matt. 23:13). In our case, therefore, the main thought meant by Jesus in the promise of the keys seems to be that of teaching (Matt. 13:52), and of the disciplinary power by which it is to be enforced. This is confirmed by the words that follow. "To bind" and "to loose" are technical Rabbinic terms for the power of the doctor of the law to "pronounce forbidden" or "pronounce permitted" some actions about which a question has arisen, while the terms are occasionally applied to disciplinary measures such as excommunication. Now the power of the church to bind and to loose is a power to interpret the law of Christ and not a power to add to it or to take from it, just as the power recognized in the scribes was a power to interpret the law of Moses and not to add to it. (Commentary on Holy Scripture by Gore, Goudge and Guillaume, p. 168)

On the contrary, the practice of the Roman Catholic Church in granting indulgences is diametrically opposed to such a logical interpretation, and, consequently, presupposes an authority which is "beyond the things that are written." The duty of a minister, steward, or administrator is necessarily limited by the will of his master, so that he can do only what he is authorized to do. The apostles in the beginning and now the Church have always bound and loosed not through the alleged power of remitting imaginary temporal punishments, but through the natural channel of preaching, baptizing, correcting and punishing in due time. Matthew 16:19 does not endow the Roman Catholic Church with any peculiar power and indulgences are indeed an invention of the priests in order to deceive and exploit the invincible ignorance of innumerable superstitious people.

The same thing can be said concerning the communion of saints about which not even Romanists may find a reasonable passage in the Scripture in order to support their complicated

theory of the three churches, militant, suffering, and triumphant. Neither can they prove the existence of the so-called treasury of the Church, formed by the superabundant satisfaction of Christ and by the merits of the Virgin Mary and of other saints, which have been accumulated throughout the centuries nobody knows where. And yet it is amazing to see endless crowds of people of all kinds and conditions believe in the doctrine of indulgences with such a fanaticism that they would make any sacrifice in money and personal mortification for the privilege, they say, of gaining the partial or total remission of the temporal punishments due to their sins on the occasion of a Jubilee in Rome. Such is the power of a religious custom practiced from generation to generation in intellectual blindness and spiritual serfdom.

### **RESULTS OF TRADITION**

The true origin and foundation of the doctrine of indulgences is not to be found in the Word of God, but rather in the tradition of the Roman Catholic Church; a tradition which has changed and transformed holy things, practiced for good in the early Christianity, in what is today the most ponderous system of politico-religious organization in the world. Unfortunately for Christendom this tradition is still at work through the progressive increase of dogmatic definitions, and on Nov. 17 1950, we have witnessed the papal proclamation of another dogma, that of the bodily assumption of Mary into heaven. We may easily guess how many new doctrines shall be defined a hundred years from now.

According to the Roman Catholic theologians, the doctrine of indulgences has developed from the penitential discipline of the early Church. Christians who had been convicted of crimes were required to make confession of them publicly before the entire congregation, to implore pardon, and to undergo whatever punishment the Church thought best to impose on them. This was done as well for example as to prevent reproach to the Christian religion among infidels. However, these punishments were not supposed to be satisfactory to God in the so-called internal forum, but only unto the Church or the external forum. The idea about the remission of the temporal punishment valid before God as

understood by Romanists today cannot be traced in any of the writers of the age who mention the practice. At the latter end of the third century, when many had lapsed through fear of persecution, the punishment and period of probation became more severe and lengthened before they were readmitted. Sometimes the period was protracted for a series of years. Hence, arose the custom of prescribing times or periods—five, ten or more years of penance; but, lest the penitent should lose heart, or be driven to despair, the bishops took upon themselves, under certain circumstances, to mitigate the period of punishment. This act was called a relaxation or remission, that is an indulgence. (A History of Reformatory Movements by Rowe, p. 267)

An early and explicit proof of such a practice can be found in the fifth canon of the Council of Ancyra (314). This discretionary leniency was sometimes granted by the bishops on the intercession of those who were witnessing for the truth in prison, as appears from the writings of Cyprian and Tertullian (*De Pudic.*, c. 22; *De Lapsis*, c. 5) ; sometimes also at the instance of the civil magistrate. The episcopal power was occasionally exercised, not only in a shortening of the canonical duration of the penance, but in some mitigation of the nature of the penalty itself (*Syn. Anc.*, c. 2). We find indication at a very early period that some of the minor ecclesiastical offences could be readily and canonically atoned for by almsgiving (*Aug. De Fide et Operibus*, c. 19) ; thus gradually arose, by steps which can readily be conjectured:, a regular system of commutations (redemptiones, commutationes), set forth in penitential books (*libri penitentiales*), offering striking analogies to the provisions made by the various criminal codes by which the Theodosian Code was supplanted throughout Europe. In the Penitential of the Greek Theodore of Canterbury for example (690), which is to be found in Migne's *Patrologia*, a canonical fast of days, weeks, or years may be redeemed by saying a proportionable number of psalms, or by paying an adequate fine. For more than four centuries this work held a position of great authority all over Europe. At the time of the Crusades, to go to Palestine and take part in the war against the infidels was considered to be a work of such extraordinary merit as to render

unnecessary any other penitential act on the part of the sinner who engaged in it. Thus at the council of Clermont, held under Urban II (1095), it was decreed that "that journey would be reputed for the remission of all penance." Later on the greatest schoolmen reduced to a theory the praxis which had gradually sprung up within the Western Church. (Encycl. Brit., vol. 12, pp. 846-47)

However, it must be said that even when the doctrine of indulgences was first systematized, it was understood in a far different sense from its modern use. It signified only a discharge, a mitigation, or pardon of the canonical censures and penalties inflicted by the church, and not at all a remission of the temporal punishment due to the divine justice for the sins of the penitent already forgiven otherwise. Neither was there any mention about indulgences applicable in behalf of the souls of the dead suffering in the purifying fire of purgatory. The actual idea of indulgences cannot be traced back before the thirteenth century. That is why we want to tell our Catholic friends that the doctrine of indulgences has not come to us as a practice derived from the divine revelation, but as a result of Roman Catholic tradition, and as such is of human origin and, therefore, must be rejected as an apostasy from early Christianity.

### **AGAINST GOD'S PLAN OF PARDON**

Another reason why indulgences should be utterly condemned is because they are against God's plan of pardon. Although everyone recognizes that God is loving and merciful and is always ready to meet the needs of the sinners, nevertheless He has established a definite plan in order to grant them full remission of their sins. This involves not only the guilt or offence to God, but also the penalty which is the consequence of sin. The plan of God is very simple: baptism for those newly-converted to Christianity, and repentance for Christians who have fallen into sin. There is no other way of obtaining the divine pardon. As far as baptism is concerned, Romanists concede that both the guilt and the penalty of sin is fully remitted by it, while this is not so in the case of repentance in which there remains to be paid the alleged penalty of temporal punishment. On the contrary, the Bible assures us that

God's forgiveness is not only full and complete, but likewise abundant: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Is. 55:7. Could the prophet say that God's pardon is abundant if his forgiveness would not include also the total extinction of the temporal punishment due to sin? Can Romanists produce any passage in which God, our supreme lawgiver, has ever followed a different policy than that shown in Isaiah? Can we imagine our merciful and loving God forgiving a repented sinner as to the guilt and, at the same time, condemning him to pay for the debt of temporal punishment attached to his sins? This is exactly what the Roman Church teaches in its doctrines of purgatory and indulgences: a half-forgiveness whose final outcome has been placed in the hands of the priests, who may bind or loose at will the spiritual future of their unfortunate subjects. The power of granting indulgences for the remission of the temporal punishments, which otherwise should be paid here or in purgatory, as claimed by the Church of Rome, is not only above and beyond the authority of the Word of God, but is in open opposition to the divine plan of pardon. It is foolish therefore for our Catholic friends to gain indulgences whose existence is in the realm of the fables and whose benefit is only imaginary. They should better put their trust and confidence in our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the propitiation for our sins, our advocate with the Father who will forgive us not only the guilt but also the penalty due to our trespasses if we truly repent and sincerely ask for his pardon. Let them listen to the affectionate words of the beloved disciple: "My little children, these things I write to you, that you may not sin. But if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just. And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world." 1 John 2:1-2.

### **CONTRADICTION WITH OTHER CATHOLIC DOCTRINES**

Finally, the doctrine of indulgences contradicts other Roman Catholic tenets as, for instance, confession, extreme unction, and

purgatory, besides opening the way to spiritual idleness and shameful abuses.

First of all, indulgences, being a remission of the temporal punishment due to sin, devoid the sacrament of penance of its efficacy and validity. In fact, it is the official teaching of the Roman Church that in order to have a valid confession it is necessary to comply with three conditions, namely sorrow of sin, auricular account to a priest of one's trespasses, and satisfaction which is "the act by which the sinner endeavours to make reparation to God for offences committed against him by undergoing some form of punishment." Moreover, the Church goes on to say that "the effect of sacramental satisfaction is the remission *ex opere operato* (wrought from the work) of temporal punishment due to sin." (A Catholic Dict., p. 475) If through indulgences the sinner is completely freed from the temporal punishment due to his sins, the satisfaction, requested by the sacrament, is made void and therefore confession becomes invalid.

Furthermore, indulgences nullify the meaning of the sacrament of extreme unction which, according to the Roman Catholic position, "comforts in the pains of sickness and strengthens the patient against temptations; remits venial sins and cleanses the soul from the remains of sin; and restore to health when God sees fit." By the expression "remains of sin" the theologians mean "the inclination to evil and weakness of the will as well as the temporal punishment due to sin." (Synopsis Theol. Dogm. by Tan-querey, vol. 3, p. 691) If this is so, extreme unction would be useless, the temporal punishment being already remitted by indulgences which are granted by the Church abundantly and without any condition upon all those who are in danger of life (in *articulo mortis*).

But the doctrine of indulgences is even more contradictory when considered in relation with the dogma of purgatory from which it derives. Knowing, in fact, that the primary purpose of indulgences is the remission of the temporal punishments due to sins, and being also assured by the Roman Church that "venial sins can be remitted by prayer or other good works," there is no need any more for an intermediate place of purification. What should be

purified when the so-called treasury of the Church has already provided for a full relaxation of the very same things which are supposed to be punished in purgatory? If indulgences really work and are so easy to gain, especially in articulo mortis, why purgatory? And if purgatory, to which the majority of Roman Catholics, it is said, will have to go, why indulgences? We wonder if the hierarchy is making joke of its own subjects, blessing with one hand and punishing with the other.

### **CAUSE OF LAZINESS AND TRAGIC ABUSES**

Even though we disagree with those who have considered indulgences as "a remission of past sins, or a license to commit sin granted by the pope as a spiritual compensation to the faithful for pecuniary offerings made him," nevertheless we cannot but emphasize the fact that indulgences are at variance with the spirit of the gospel, stimulating spiritual easiness and dangerous laziness in facing temptations and sins. They constitute a slippery road that may hinder, if not kill, the religious life of the vicarious merits of others than upon the obedience to the commandments of God. That this is true can be seen from the scandalous abuses that flooded the Roman Catholic Church at various times, particularly in the sixteenth century during the infamous traffic in indulgences. Even Romanists are compelled to admit such abuses, especially in the case of John Tetzel who, being appointed as chief preacher to announce the great indulgence in Germany for collecting money in order to bring to completion the church of St. Peter in Rome, used methods and words which were the proximate cause of the Protestant Reformation. This Dominican monk with unparalleled zeal and energy made appeals for money that today could be considered as powerful examples of salesmanship. Among similar appeals the following is particularly moving for its emotional efficacy: "Even repentance is not indispensable. But more than all this: indulgences save not the living alone—they also save the dead. Ye priests, ye nobles, ye tradesmen, ye wives, ye maidens, and ye young men, hearken to your departed parents and friends, who cry to you from the bottomless abyss: 'We are enduring horrible torments! a small alms would deliver us; you can give it,

and you will not!" The very moment the money clinks against the bottom of the chest, the soul escapes from purgatory, and flies free to heaven." (Dowling, History of Romanism, p. 443)

Tetzel was not even ashamed to fix prices according to the rank of his client and to the gravity of sins, guaranteeing that indulgences, gained in change of resounding money, would assure not only full pardon of all sins, but that "at death the gate of the place of torment shall be shut against thee." Such and other abominable practices used by Tetzel and Catholic company show very clearly the kind of abuses to which indulgences even today might open the way. Although Romanists say that the abuses have been removed by forbidding the taking of money for indulgences, yet a so-called free-will offering is not considered a fee and is permitted. Besides, there are thousands of purgatorial associations within the Roman Church today, whose memberships are usually sold from \$5 per individual to \$25 per family. As compensation the members are assured of a perpetual remembrance for their deceased relatives and friends and of having a share in masses, prayers and good works offered by the association. (Paulist Calendar, April, 1952) Of course, Romanists would be highly scandalized if we would call practices such as these a raising of money under false pretenses, or a selling of spiritual deeds for material goods. It is their privilege, however, to believe as they want to, but we feel it to be our imperative duty to denounce the fraudulent practices of Roman Catholicism whose world-wide success is mainly due to the superstitious ignorance of the people, enslaved and deceived from time immemorable by the insatiable avarice of their priests. We are deeply concerned about our poor Catholic friends, unconscious victims of an erroneous tradition that has taught them man-made doctrines instead of New Testament truths. We want to discourage them from continuing to gain fallacious indulgences which can neither remit the alleged temporal punishment due to their sins nor release their departed beloved ones from the excruciating flames of a non-existent purgatory. We want them to know that indulgences have not the least foundation in the Bible, have been introduced by men as a means of enriching the material rather than the spiritual treasury of

the Church, are at variance with God's plan of pardon, contradicting other Roman Catholic doctrines and causing spiritual inactivity and possible ruin to many souls. We want and pray that the light of our Lord may finally shine in their minds, may warm up their hearts in such a way that from, now on they will put their only hope in Christ Jesus, the "one mediator between God and man: who gave himself a ransom for all." 1 Tim. 2:5-6.

## **CHAPTER 9**

### **THE CATHOLIC MASS**

Undoubtedly the Catholic mass is one of the most important rites celebrated in the Church of Rome, because it constitutes in a real sense its chief religious service that absorbs into itself nearly all public acts of worship. It is a fact that in all the manifestations of their spiritual life Catholics turn to the mass as the source of all benefits, in which they find strength for their daily cares and courage to fight the battle of their faith. The mass is recited at any important occasion as, for instance, the opening of a convention, the blessing of a marriage, the dedication of a church, the consecration of a nun, the profession of a monk, the burial of the dead. It is said both for imploring divine help and as a thanksgiving for received blessings, it is celebrated for the living as well as for the benefit of the dead. In a word, there is no act in the Catholic life where the mass does not play an all-important part. For this very reason masses are celebrated daily in all churches and in churches where there are many altars many times a day.

With regard to the doctrine Romanists unanimously proclaim that the mass has been instituted by Christ and, therefore, is a sacrament; that it is the true sacrifice of the New Law in which Christ offers Himself to God in an unbloody manner through the ministry of the priest; and that it is a communion with the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus through the Catholic miracle of transubstantiation. That such gratuitous and peremptory statements are a distortion of the simple ceremony of the Lord's Supper may be seen in the course of our discussion in which we

shall expose point by point the main positions held by the Roman Church on the matter.

### **MEANING OF THE MASS**

To begin with, it is necessary to know what the Roman Catholics truly mean and believe in their central act of worship called the mass. According to some theologians the derivation of the word "mass" comes from the Hebrew term "missach" (Deut. 16), which means a free offering. But according to the majority of Catholic scholars it is derived from *missio*, meaning dismissal, and has reference to the dismissal of the catechumens, public penitents, and *energumens* (demoniacs) before the offertory, and that of the faithful at the end when the priest says: "Ite missa est" (Go, the mass is over). Such is the formula with which the Roman eucharistic service concludes. "By degrees," writes Waterland, "it came to be used for an assembly and for church service. From signifying a church service in general, it came at length to denote the communion service in particular, and so that most emphatically came to be called the mass." That such a name was not in use in the early church is shown from the fact that until the sixth century it was never adopted to signify the ordinance of the Supper which, instead, was usually referred to as "Eucharist" (thanksgiving), "Oblation" (offering), "Holy Communion", "Mysterium" (mystery), etc.

From the Roman Catholic viewpoint there are four distinct types of the celebration of mass, each one of which is an equally true and proper offering of the sacrifice. They are (1) Pontifical Mass (of which Papal Mass is a special form) ; (2) High or Solemn Mass; (3) Sung Mass; and (4) Low Mass. (A Cath. Dictionary, p. 330)

### **DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE MASS**

The liturgy or rite of the mass ordinarily consists of the following parts: introit or preparation, collects or prayers, epistle, gospel, Nicene Creed, offertory of bread and wine, washing of hands, secret, preface, consecration of the elements, communion of the celebrant and then of the people, ablutions, post-communion

prayers, dismissal, blessing, last gospel. However, the most important parts of the mass are three, namely offertory, consecration and communion. In the offertory the celebrant first offers up the bread or host on the paten (plate) saying, "Receive, O Holy Father...this spotless host;" and after having poured the wine and a few drops of water in the chalice, he offers up the cup with the prayer, "We offer unto thee, O Lord, the chalice of salvation." In the early church the offertory consisted of the antiphonal or alternate singing of a psalm by the whole congregation during which the people made their offerings in kind. Such a custom was discontinued about the eleventh century. Today the Christian congregations have the collection in its place, which is in accordance with the apostolic practice (1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 9:7), while the Roman Church has introduced mass-stipends without any biblical authority.

By consecration is understood the action by which the priest changes miraculously the elements of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. This happens when he takes the bread, saying, "This is my body" and the wine, saying, "This is the chalice of my blood." After these words of consecration, which have the astonishing power of changing in the twinkling of an eye the whole substance of the bread and wine into the whole substance of Jesus, the celebrant genuflects, adores, and raises for the adoration of the people the host and the chalice. Such a form of idolatry can hardly be found even in the most pagan systems of worship. In this action we may see a complete departure from the primitive simplicity of the eucharistic ordinance which Romanists have transformed in a magic performance of religious charm. A "supper" is something to be partaken of, not to be worshipped. Bread and wine are viands to be eaten and drunk, not to be adored. That on which they are placed is a table, round which the guests gather as for a common meal, not an altar.

The third important part of the mass is the communion by which Catholics have been taught they receive, under the appearance of material elements, the true body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus Christ in his entirety exactly as He is actually living in heaven. However, it must be born in mind that this does

not mean that they really believe to eat and drink the material flesh and blood of Christ for such a thing would be a metaphysical absurdity even for Catholics; what they believe in the communion is the sacramental reception of the Lord in their souls substantially, not physically. The holy communion may be received only by those who have been baptized and have the requisite dispositions, namely, state of grace, right intention, and, normally, fasting from midnight. The Council of Trent, after having established that at least once a year the faithful must receive the host, recommended the frequent reception of the communion for the following reasons: "Our Saviour wished that this Sacrament should be received as the spiritual food of souls, whereby may be fed and strengthened those who live the life of him who said 'He that eateth me, the same also shall live by me'; and as an antidote whereby we may be freed from daily faults and preserved from deadly sin. He would, moreover, have it to be a pledge of our glory to come and everlasting happiness" (Sess. 13, 2).

Usually Christians wonder why the Catholic laity communicate under one kind, namely bread; but Romanists explain that it is because in the Council of Constance (1415) as well as in that of Trent (1545-63) it was stated that Christ is "as much contained under either species as under both; for Christ, whole and entire, exists under the species of bread and under each part of that bread; and whole under the species of wine and under its separate parts . . . and they who receive under one species alone are deprived of no grace necessary to salvation" (Sess. 13, 22). But this explanation is by no means satisfactory, because a practice such as this is thoroughly unscriptural and completely devoids the primary meaning of the Supper. Anyone who has a little knowledge of the Bible may see this. Our Catholic friends should recognize that in taking away the cup from them the Roman Church has violated the commandment of the Lord who requested his followers to communicate under both elements of bread and wine, and has split a ceremony which, being instituted as a meal in loving commemoration of the Lord's death, cannot be rightly celebrated by using only one species. Can there be a complete meal without drink? If the taking of bread alone would suffice for the

observance of Christ's ordinance, why, we may ask, did the Roman Catholic Church itself give the wine to the laity for so many centuries previous to such a restriction? Was the church then right or now? This fact is an irrefutable proof that the Church of Rome has gone astray from the apostolic practice still extant in all Eastern churches as well as in the Christian congregations. Our Catholic friends are here confronted with a very serious problem concerning a fundamental belief of Christianity, the second great ordinance of the gospel, the Lord's Supper. Can a Church, which claims infallibility, be fallible on such an important matter of faith? And yet by refusing the wine to its laity and by allowing its faithful to take communion outside the celebration of the Supper the Roman Church has committed the most flagrant disobedience to the commandment of Jesus Christ.

### **DOCTRINAL CONTENT OF THE MASS**

The official definition of the mass can be found in any Roman Catholic catechism, in which it is said that the mass is the sacrifice of the New Law in which Christ, through the ministry of the priest, offers Himself to God in an unbloody manner under the appearance of bread and wine. Cardinal Gibbons defines the mass in this way: "The consecration of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, and the oblation of this body and blood to God, by the ministry of the priest, for a perpetual memorial of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. The sacrifice of the Mass is identical with that of the cross, both having the same victim and High Priest, Jesus Christ." (The Faith of Our Fathers, p. 311)

The Council of Trent (Sess. 22, c. 2) declares that only the manner of offering is different, "In the Mass the same Christ is present and immolated in an unbloody manner while on the altar of the cross He once for all offered himself in a bloody manner." On the cross He purchased our ransom, and in the Eucharistic Sacrifice the price of that ransom is applied to the soul. Hence all the efficacy of the Mass is derived from the sacrifice of Calvary. Thus the Mass gives supreme honour and glory to God and offers him thanks for his benefits, both in an infinite degree; moreover, it begs and obtains God's pardon for our sins and is effective in

obtaining further graces and blessings, to an extent dependent on the worthiness and devotion of the priest saying the Mass, of the faithful assisting, and of the whole Church on earth. (A Cath. Dictionary, p. 468)

Now, Romanists claim that Jesus Christ did really institute this complicated and highly developed religious ceremony called the mass, and that the apostles taught it and left it to the future Christian generations. Of course, nothing could be further from the truth. Neither Jesus nor the apostles ever knew about the Catholic mass and therefore they could not institute or celebrate it as the Roman Catholics pretend. As a matter of fact, it came into being only late in the history of the Church and was an evolution of the Lord's Supper mixed with pagan rites and Jewish ceremonies. In the New Testament there does not even occur the word "mass" by which the "Eucharistic Sacrifice" is meant. The earliest known example of its use is in Ambrose (Epist. 20 ad Marcellinum) "missam facere coepi," and it is unmeaning and inappropriate as a name of the sacrament to which it has accidentally attached itself. Before Gregory the Great (590-604) there was no peculiar liturgy for the celebration of the mass, whose name was certainly taken from an old ceremony common among pagan Roman priests, who, when their devotions were concluded, discharged the throng with the words: "Ite missio est." This, by gradual corruption, passed into missa. In this respect, Polydore Virgil, a Catholic scholar, says: "When the Mass is ended, the deacon, turning to the people, sayeth, "Ite Missa est," which words are borrowed from the rite of the pagans, and signifieth that then their company may be dismissed. It was used in the sacrifice of Isis, that when the observances were duly and fully performed and accomplished, then the minister of religion should give warning or a watchword what time they should lawfully depart. And of this springs our custom of singing Ite Missa est for a certain signification that the full service was finished" (Book 5, c. 9, p. 110). How then can Romanists assert that the Catholic mass was instituted by Jesus Christ? Are their minds completely darkened?

Jesus Christ did not institute anything except the Lord's Supper which is a perennial memorial of his sacrifice upon the

cross. In commemorating his precious death we have fellowship and communion with our Lord who is spiritually present in a singular way at the Table when we partake of both elements of bread and wine. For many centuries before the institution of the mass Christians had no other understanding of the Lord's Supper than that expressed in the New Testament with such a beautiful simplicity and spiritual meaning. In 1 Cor. 11:23 ff., Paul emphasized the necessity of being pure and clean without spot in receiving the communion with the body and blood of Jesus Christ, after having given a complete account of the holy ceremony practised by all in the same way he received it: "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and giving thanks, broke and said: Take ye and eat: This is my body, which shall be delivered for you. This do for the commemoration of me. In like manner also the chalice, after he had supped, saying: This chalice is the new testament in my blood. This do ye, as often as ye shall drink, for the commemoration of me. For as often as you shall eat this bread and drink the chalice, ye shall shew the death of the Lord, until he come." From the Acts we know that upon the first day of the week the disciples used to meet together not to celebrate the mass, but to break bread, and that is to have the Lord's Supper. From the early history of the church we also know that elders, deacons, cantors, and the entire congregation took part in the eucharistic services, breaking the bread together and partaking of the cup according to the apostolic practice. These services are so clearly described by the fathers that Roman Catholic scholars are often embarrassed when treating on the history of the mass. For instance, Justin Martyr (130) delineates, in the following words, the touching simplicity of the worship as it was practised in the primitive Christianity, which has nothing in common with the Catholic mass: "On the day that is called Sunday, there is an assembly in the same place...and the histories of the apostles and the writings of the prophets are read; then the reading ceasing, the president verbally admonishes and exhorts the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise in common and offer prayers, bread and wine and water are offered,

and the president offers prayers and thanksgiving . . . and the people joyfully cry out, saying, Amen. And the distribution and the communication is to each of those who have returned thanks... And this food is called by us the eucharist" (2 Apology, p. 97). Roman Catholic theologians do not offer us any scriptural evidence to substantiate their claim, because the biblical references they quote are exclusively related to the Lord's Supper and not to the Catholic mass.

### **THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS**

In all official definitions of the mass Romanists emphasize the sacrificial action of it by affirming that Jesus Christ, instituting the mass, intended it to be a continuing sacrifice, expressing Christian adoration, praise, contrition, and petition. They say that it not only is a commemoration of the sacrifice of the cross, but is itself a true sacrifice in the strict sense of the term. "It is a true sacrifice because it has all the essentials of a true sacrifice: its Priest, Jesus Christ, using the ministry of an earthly representative; its Victim, Jesus Christ, truly present under the appearances of bread and wine; its sacrificial offering, the mystic rite of consecration." That this is another gratuitous assumption of the Roman Catholic Church no conscientious student of Scripture and history may deny. Not only the Romanist statements cannot be justified by the Bible but directly contradict it. In fact, in the letter to the Hebrews it is said very clearly that Christ, once for all, suffered and died on the cross for the salvation of mankind (9:25-26); that there remains no more reason for further sacrifices as far as Christ is concerned (10:26); that he is "our passover," having been sacrificed for us, and no further sacrifice prevails (1 Cor. 5:7). And indeed, in this one, perfect and sufficient sacrifice on Calvary, Christ offered perfect obedience to the Father in the atonement for the sins of the whole world. This was an act of expiation made once and for all and is not repeatable (7:27; 9:27-28). Christians were commanded not to offer unbloody sacrifices as that of the Catholic mass, in which Christ mystically is offered and immolated again upon the altar, but spiritual sacrifices as Peter said: "Ye also, as lively stones, are build up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer

up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." 1 Pet. 2:5. And the apostle Paul in many instances, like Rom. 12:1; Ph. 4:18; Heb. 13:15-16, has stressed the same thought concerning the only type of sacrifice which was requested of the faithful in the churches of the Lord.

Moreover, we may add that the Petrine and Pauline idea about the new kind of sacrifice to be offered by Christians finds its source in the contemporary Jewish and Greek literature which reflects a clear-cut modification of the traditional meaning of the old sacrifice. Among the Jews the preaching of the prophets had been a constant protest against the grosser forms of sacrifice, and there are indications that when Christianity arose bloody sacrifices were already beginning to fall in disuse; a saying which was attributed by the Ebionites to our Lord repeats this protest in a strong form, "I have come to abolish the sacrifices; and if you do not cease from sacrificing the wrath of God will not cease from you" (Epiph. 30, 16). Among the Greeks the philosophers had come to use both argument and ridicule against the idea that the offering of material things could be needed by or acceptable to the Maker of them all. Among both Jews and Greeks the earlier forms of the idea had been rationalized into the belief that the most appropriate offering to God is that of a pure and penitent heart, and among them both was the idea that the vocal expression of contrition in prayer or of gratitude in praise is also acceptable. The best instances of these ideas in the Old Testament are in Psalms 49 and 50 (King James 50 and 51), and in the Greek literature the striking words which Porphyry quotes from an earlier writer, "We ought, then, having been united and made like to God, to offer our own conduct as a holy sacrifice to Him, the same being also a hymn and our salvation in passionless excellence of soul" (Euseb. Dem. Ev., 3). The ideas are also found both in the New Testament and in early Christian literature: "Let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to His name" (Heb. 13:15); "That prayers and thanksgiving made by worthy persons, are the only perfect and acceptable sacrifices I also admit" (Just. Mart., Trypho, c. 117); "We honour God in prayer, and offer this as the best and holiest

sacrifice with righteousness to the righteous Word" (Clem. Alex., Strom., 7, 6).

Besides prayers, in the Scripture there is mentioned another form of sacrifice, which probably arose from the conception that God, being in an especial sense the protector of the poor, accepts as a sacrifice of praise unto Him, the offerings or alms bestowed upon the needy. Biblical instances of this idea are: "He who doeth alms is offering a sacrifice of praise" (Eccle.); "Thy prayers and thy alms are ascended for a memorial before God" (Acts 10:4); "To do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Heb. 13:16); so the offerings sent by the Philippians to Paul when a prisoner at Rome are "an odour of a sweet smell, well pleasing to God" (Phil. 4:18). (Encyclop. Brit., vol. 21, p. 138)

Now, from these and other forms of spiritual sacrifices, practised by the Jews and perpetuated in Christianity through apostolic examples, gradually developed the conception that the elements of bread and wine used in the Lord's Supper constituted a true oblation of the fruits of the earth to the Creator and, therefore, came to be considered, in the course of time, as a real sacrifice of the New Law. Elders, called presbyters and priests, became sacrificing mediators between God and men, and the new "Sacrifice of the Mass" was transformed in a cure-all for spiritual and physical ills. But for many centuries before this transformation came into existence the "eucharist" was considered only as a "relationship of glory and benediction and praise and singing," completely ignoring the liturgical ceremonies and sacrificial meaning attached later to the Catholic mass.

Roman Catholic scholars are well aware of the late origin of the sacrificial character of the mass. Rev. Dr. Joseph Pohle, professor of dogmatic theology at the University of Breslau and one of the greatest authorities on the history of the mass, cleverly starts his treatise by quoting Harnack as saying "that the early Church up to the time of Cyprian contented itself with the purely spiritual sacrifice of adoration and thanksgiving, and that it did not possess the sacrifice of the Mass, as Catholicism now understands it." Explaining in more details his thought, the professor goes on to

say that "an impartial study of the earliest texts seems indeed to make this much clearer, that the early Church paid most attention to the spiritual and subjective side of the sacrifice and laid chief stress on prayer and thanksgiving in the Eucharistic function... That there has been an historical dogmatic development from the indefinite to the definite, from the implicit to the explicit, from the seed to the fruit, no one familiar with the subject will deny."  
(Converted Catholic Magaz., April, 1952)

Another Roman Catholic scholar of the 16th century, Melchior Canus, explains how step by step the Lord's Supper was changed into a sacrifice: "When the word 'sacrifice' was used by the Fathers, it was not in the sense in which it is now used; and this is evident from the fact that they used the same term as applied to 'baptism.' Truly, because in baptism we die together with Christ, and by this sacrament the sacrifice of the cross is applied unto us to the full remission of sin, hence they call baptism metaphorically a sacrifice. And for the same purpose did they call the sacrament of the Lord's Supper a sacrifice, metaphorically being a memorial of the sacrifice of the cross." (Theology, vol. 12, pp. 424-426)

From the above statements flows the only logical conclusion that the Catholic mass is neither a sacrifice nor was instituted by Jesus Christ, as Romanists claim, but is a result of tradition grown and developed around the holy ordinance of the Supper.

### **THE MIRACLE OF TRANSUBSTANTIATION**

The heart and core of the mass, according to the Catholics, is in the changing of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus Christ, which action or miracle is called with a technical term, "transubstantiation." This big word was coined by the theologians at the end of the eleventh century and was officially approved in the Lateran Council of 1215. It comes from the Latin "trans" (beyond) and "substantia" (substance) and is defined by the council of Trent as "the wonderful and singular conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the Body of Christ and of the whole substance of the wine into the Blood, the species of bread and wine alone remaining." (Sess. 13, c. 2) This means that both the matter and the form of the bread and wine cease to be; that

body and blood begin to be in a new way; and that the common bond between these two pairs of terms is the species. (A Cath. Dictionary, p. 528)

After the words of the consecration by the priest, through an alleged miracle Jesus Christ becomes present in both elements with his body, his blood, his soul, and his divinity. And such a presence remains as long as the species are not corrupted. That is why Catholics may adore the Blessed Sacrament of the altar, believing that Jesus is really and constantly present inside the tabernacle. However, it must be repeated here that his presence is not to be understood in a corporeal or fleshly way, as many could be inclined to believe, but in a mystical (spiritual reality) way. According to Aristotle, from whom Thomas Aquinas borrowed his doctrine on transubstantiation, substance is the essence or nature of a thing; that in which the exterior qualities inhere; that which constitutes anything what it is, and therefore it cannot be but a spiritual reality. Now, in transubstantiation this spiritual reality (substance) of bread and wine is changed into the spiritual reality (substance) of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, even this is a miracle which has no ground in the Bible. When Jesus Christ said: "This is my body, this is my blood," he meant that he would be really present in the elements without changing their substance, which would constitute a useless miracle. In other words, he would be with the communicants' souls while they are eating and drinking bread and wine, symbolizing his body and blood, rather than be in the material elements only. Likewise the expression "this do in remembrance of me" is not exclusively referred to the elements, but to the whole service as a commemoration of his sacrifice on the cross.

This is the way in which the Lord's Supper always has been considered in all ages even by the Roman Catholic Church before the doctrine of transubstantiation was introduced. In fact, Gelasius, bishop of Rome in 492 A.D., made a dictum concerning the "eucharist" which is in complete contradiction with the decree of the council of Trent quoted above. He said: "Certainly the sacrament of the body and blood of our Lord, which we receive, is a divine thing; because by these we are made partakers of the

divine nature. Nevertheless, the substance or nature of the bread and wine cease not to exist; and, assuredly, the image and similitude of the body and blood of Christ are celebrated in the action of the mysteries." We wonder if the fathers of the council of Trent ever read Gelasius' statement which shows such a striking contrast with theirs. We wonder also if, during the definition of the papal infallibility, the fathers of the Vatican Council did notice the contradiction between the decree of pope Gelasius and that of Trent. Anyway, we hope that our Catholic friends will understand at least the difficulty involved in the statements of the Roman Church and be stimulated to study the matter with the seriousness and dedication required by the importance of the issues discussed.

In conclusion, we may say that Jesus Christ did not institute the Catholic mass, which was a gradual evolution and transformation of the Lord's Supper produced within the Roman Church; that he did not intend any other sacrifice except his own made once for all for the salvation of sinners, and, finally, that the central act of Christian worship is not the priestly mass expressed in the transubstantiation, but the one mentioned in the New Testament which commands participation of the Lord's Table upon the first day of every week. We invite our Catholic friends to read these beautiful words of Latimer: "Let us trust upon Christ's only death and look for none other sacrifice propitiatory than the same bloody sacrifice, the lively sacrifice propitiatory than the same bloody sacrifice, the lively sacrifice, not the dry sacrifice but a bloody sacrifice. Christ, our passover, is offered, so that the thing is done and Christ hath done it once and for all and it was a bloody sacrifice."

## **CHAPTER 10**

### **MARY'S PERPETUAL VIRGINITY**

Among the many privileges that Roman Catholics believe to have been bestowed by God upon Mary, that of her perpetual virginity has been considered as one of the most important for its intimate relationship with the birth of Jesus Christ. According to them, Mary, the mother of Jesus, by a unique grace has always

remained a virgin: before, during and after the birth of our Saviour. The Baltimore Catechism puts it in this way: "Mary, the Mother of God, remained a virgin not only in the conception of Christ but also in His birth and during the rest of her life." Romanists say that it would be a blasphemy and a sacrilege to believe the contrary, and therefore endeavor to support the doctrine with Scripture references and, of course, tradition expressed in the writings of the Church fathers, especially Origen, Jerome, Ambrosius, and Epiphanius. Needless to say that such a doctrine was introduced in the Roman Church as a result of the effort to adjust Christianity to the custom of contemporary pagan religions which honored goddesses together with gods. Exalting Mary above all God's creatures, it was natural to pave the way for her coronation as queen of heaven, sitting at the right hand of Jesus and in the attitude of dispensing graces in behalf of her devotees. So that, in the process of Mary's deification, she was believed to have been supernaturally conceived, to have lived as a perpetual virgin and without original or other sin, and at death to have been protected from mortal dissolution by the elevation of her body to heaven. Finally, the Very Rev. John A. Flinn, president of the Catholic University of St. John, has assured us, in a public address in March, 1954, that three more Marian dogmas would be established by papal authority within the next hundred years; and that is the belief in Mary as Co-Redemptrix of the human race; as Mediatrix of all graces; and as Queen participating with her Son in the power of ruling the world. It is no wonder therefore that Catholics call Mary, "Mother of God." In the present chapter we shall see what the Scriptures really say about the perpetual virginity of Mary, whom we do honor and respect and admire as the blessed mother of our Lord, but reserving only for God our humble tribute of cult and worship.

### **"BEHOLD, A VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD"**

The wonderful place of Mary in the divine project of redemption has been portrayed by Matthew and Luke in such a way that it does not offer any escape for misunderstanding. The mother of Jesus appears in the gospel as the favorite of God, as the

virgin predestined to give human flesh to the eternal Word, as the spouse of the Holy Spirit through whose seed it was made possible for the Son of the Almighty to assume our own nature. For this high and unique privilege of being chosen to become the mother of our Saviour, Mary can be called truly blessed in the truest meaning of the word. In fact, with this sweet appellation she was greeted by the angel Gabriel in the day of annunciation as it is recorded in the gospel of Luke who preserved for us that touching episode: "And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women." Luke 1:26-28. With this same expression the cousin Elisabeth welcomed Mary while visiting with her: "Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb." Finally, Mary herself, brimming with joy over being pregnant with the Son of God, foresaw in her beautiful song, "Magnificat," that future Christian generations would call her "blessed":—"My soul doth magnify the Lord. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Because he hath regarded the humility of his handmaid: for, behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." Luke 1:46-48.

The reason for such a distinguished blessing is to be found in the miraculous conception of Jesus in the womb of Mary while still being a virgin, thus fulfilling, according to Matthew 1:23, the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14: "Behold, a virgin shall be with child and bring forth a son: and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." Mary, therefore, was the virgin mother of our Redeemer who was born of her in the "fulness of time." With a primitive simplicity Matthew describes this astonishing event as follows: "Now the generation of Christ was in this wise. When his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child, of the Holy Ghost. Whereupon Joseph her husband, being a just man and not willing publicly to expose her, was minded to put her away privately. But while he thought on these things, behold the angel of the Lord

appeared to him in his sleep, saying: Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her, is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son: and thou shall call his name Jesus. For he shall save his people from their sins." Matt. 1:18-21.

From the above passages of the Scripture we agree with our Catholic friends that Mary was a virgin before the birth of Jesus Christ and that she remained a virgin during the time of her pregnancy. To say the contrary not only would be Scripturally erroneous, but would constitute an explicit denial of the divinity of Christ. In fact, those who believe that Jesus was born from the natural intercourse of Mary with Joseph deny also the divine origin and nature of the Son of God, a thing which is against the revealed truth and which would undermine the very foundation of our Christian faith. But we can in no wise agree with the theory that Mary remained a perpetual virgin during her lifetime because of the unique privilege of being the "mother of God." In no passage of the Bible may we find any hint concerning such a fallacious doctrine, as we shall see in the sequel of our discussion. The name with which faithful Christians shall always call Mary is the same given to her prophetically by the cousin Elisabeth when she first saw her coming unto her house: "And whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" Luke 1:43. Mary is indeed the mother of our Lord who remained virgin, according to the Scripture, until the birth of Jesus.

### **TRUE MEANING OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH**

When speaking about the birth of Jesus Christ our Christian brethren employ an expression which apparently would seem to support the Roman Catholic belief that Mary remained virgin in the very act of delivery or parturition. But it is not so, because by "virgin birth" they understand that Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit and that Joseph was only the reputed father of the Lord. They acknowledge his divinity by accepting literally the New Testament version of the virginity of Mary. However, in order to avoid confusion, I would like to suggest to change the expression "virgin birth" of Protestant origin to that of "virgin

conception" which is more exact and Scripturally meaningful.

In supporting their belief about Mary's virginity in the act of birth, Romanists have no Scripture references to quote, but declare that the fathers of the Church, commenting on the expression of the evangelists, have deduced that Jesus was born without breaking the vaginal organs of his mother. In other words, he passed through the hymen miraculously without opening it. Catholic theologians have also endeavored to explain this miracle with some illustrations. They say that Jesus Christ came forth from the womb of his mother in the same way he rose up from the tomb without breaking the stones or as he entered in the meeting place of his disciples after the resurrection by passing through the closed doors. However, all this is a mere product of imagination and cannot be proved with serious facts. On the contrary, such fathers as Tertullian and Origen, expressly affirmed that Mary was virgin as far as man is concerned but not in relation to Jesus' deliverance, that is, in conception but not in birth. This opinion is in accordance with the Bible and especially with reason. In fact, God in the accomplishments of his purposes does not operate miracles unless they are absolutely necessary. Even Roman Catholics believe in this old saying of the theologians: "Non sunt admittenda miracula sine necessitate" which means that miracles are not to be expected without a necessity. Now, it is not at all believable that God in the birth of his Son worked a completely useless miracle which could have not been checked by anyone and which would have derogated the laws of nature without any reasonable motive. The Bible teaches us that Jesus Christ came into this world in the likeness of man, although being a divine person; that he assumed the human nature from the bosom of his mother by the virtue of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, while the virginal conception of Mary is a divine privilege bestowed by God upon her in order to insure the eternal existence of the Word, her alleged virginal parturition or deliverance must be excluded as unscriptural, unreasonable and offensive to the plans of God.

### **MARY'S VIRGINITY AFTER THE BIRTH**

Roman Catholics not only believe that Mary remained virgin

before and during the birth of Jesus, but they also claim that she, although living for many years with her husband Joseph, had no sexual relation with him and therefore her virginity was preserved unspotted till the end of her life. Immediate consequence of such a belief is that Mary had neither sons nor daughters, having made in mutual agreement with Joseph a perpetual vow of chastity and virginity which both kept faithfully during their lifetime. In the lack of scriptural passages in behalf of this fantastic doctrine, Romanists have nothing to offer but so-called reasons of convenience. According to them, a Mary with many children would constitute (1) a derogation of Christ's perfection because, being the only begotten Son of God, it would have been inappropriate for him to have brothers and sisters; (2) it would be an offence to the Holy Spirit who, having been in the virginal womb of Mary as in a sanctuary for the formation of the flesh of Christ, would have made it unfitting for her to be touched by man; (3) it would be against the holiness of Mary to suppose that she, not contented to be the mother of such a Son, had renounced willingly her miraculous virginity; (4) finally, it would be against the sanctity of Joseph if he had been so presumptuous as to have sexual relation with a woman who had conceived by virtue of the Holy Spirit. Can we imagine a more vicious reasoning than this one? And yet there are millions of superstitious people who accept as pure gold such extravagant assertions of visionaries.

Moreover, in the process of building up the dogma of Mary's perpetual virginity, Roman Catholic scholars have twisted the Scriptures interpreting the answer of Mary to the angel, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" (Luke 1:34), as a promise or vow to remain forever a virgin. Some others have arrived at a point of seeing Mary's virginity foretold in the following passage of Ezekiel 44:2: "And the Lord said to me: this gate shall be shut. It shall not be opened and no man shall pass through it: because the Lord the God of Israel hath entered in by it." The inference is clear, although extremely vulgar: the gate of Mary's womb was shut to man because through it passed our Lord Jesus Christ. It would be very difficult for us to find a worse example of misinterpretation of God's Word. Even in Scripture Romanists apply their old fallacious

principle that the end justifies the means. Everything is good and fitting if it may be used to prove their false tenets. However, they can never prove with the Bible on hand that Mary had no other children besides Jesus. On the contrary, the revelation of God is clear enough to quote from it many passages whose authoritative strength cannot be challenged by any fair-minded person.

### **THE BRETHERN OF JESUS**

That Jesus had four brothers and several sisters is a fact recorded in the New Testament. All those who read without dogmatic prejudices the simple stories of the gospel not only have no reason to evade the natural sense of the several biblical passages concerning the family of our Lord, but they will find it very difficult to interpret them in a different way. In fact, the New Testament literature speaks so clearly and so abundantly about it that it is impossible to change the literal meaning of the Scripture without destroying also its logical connection. When, for instance, Jesus presents his disciples in the place of his brothers (who with his mother had come to take him home), saying,— "Behold my brethren!"—He is not speaking about children of another mother, but about his own natural brothers, otherwise there would be no sense in Christ's expression. In other words, he is contrasting his human family with the divine relationship that he has with those who do the will of God, because he said: "For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" Matt. 12:50. Now, if this mother and these brethren should belong to a different family, the previous question of Jesus:—"Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?"—would be completely out of place. But let us examine the Scriptures.

From the first chapter of Matthew we find a clear-cut statement concerning the sexual relations between Joseph and Mary. With a simplicity that shows the knowledge of an eye-witness of the recorded event, the evangelist says: "And Joseph...took unto him his wife. And he knew (possessed) her not till she brought forth her first-born son." Matt. 1:24-25. Despite the efforts to explain the word "till" as denoting only what is done,

without any regard to the future, Roman Catholics have not succeeded, however, to give us an understandable interpretation of the whole passage. The evangelist, who shows that he knows very well about other children of Mary and Joseph, was interested in emphasizing the divine origin of Jesus Christ by excluding any sexual relation between them until the birth of our Saviour. In a word, he intended to make it clear that our Lord was not Joseph's son. A different explanation not only would be improper, but would not make any sense at all.

Although in the most ancient manuscripts of Matthew the word "first-born" is omitted, yet we find it in Luke 2:7: "And she brought forth her first-born son." Naturally Romanists say that the meaning of "first-born" is, not that Mary had afterwards any other child, but it is a mode of speech among the Hebrews, to call also the first-born, who are the only children. But, in this case, we do not understand why Luke did not use the expression the "only-son" of Mary as does John when he speaks about Jesus as the "only begotten Son of God." John 1:14-18; 3:16-18.

However, the troubles of Catholics increase when they come to interpret passages such as this: "As he was yet speaking to the multitudes, behold his mother and his brethren stood without, seeking to speak to him. And one said to him: Behold thy mother and thy brethren stand without, seeking thee." Matt. 12:46-47; Mark 3:31-35; Luke 8:19-21. Who are these brethren? Certainly not the sons of Joseph born by a previous marriage as some fathers of the Church insinuate, because there are no evidences substantiating this theory; not the sons of Mary's sisters or brothers as Catholics believe, because they belonged to different families and it was not their business to go around with Mary seeking after Jesus. It is very unlikely that Mary was accustomed to have her nephews accompany her in her researches about her son. Neither can it be said that they were disciples, because John 2:12 distinguishes the "brethren" from the disciples, saying: "After this, he went down to Capharnaum, he and his mother and his brethren and his disciples." At a later stage, the "brethren" are still unbelievers, because in John 7:5 we read: "And his brethren said to him: Pass from hence and go into Judea, that thy disciples also

may see thy works which thou dost. For neither did his brethren believe in him." Again, the Acts 1:13-14 clearly excludes the "brethren" from the number of the twelve apostles who are listed separately from them: "And when they were come in they went up into an upper room, where abode Peter and John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James of Alpheus and Simon Zelotes and Jude the brother of James. All these were persevering with one mind in prayer, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren."

Furthermore, in Matthew 13:55-56 (Mark 6:1-6; Luke 4:16-30) we have even the names of the Lord's brothers and all the context definitely precludes that the evangelist is speaking about brothers and sisters not according to the flesh. Jesus was preaching in his own country, where the people knew him and his family very well and they were scandalized by his conduct, saying: "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary, and his brethren James and Joseph and Simon and Jude? And his sisters, are they not all with us?" How then may Catholics say that these were the children of Mary the wife of Cleophas, sister to Mary the mother of Jesus? Such a thing requires us to believe that there were two sisters bearing the same name, Mary, which is unlikely; nor does the text permit us to evade this difficulty by taking "sister" to mean "sister-in-law." According to the logical sense of the text it must be accepted that those brethren and sisters were children of Mary and Joseph, respectively the mother and reputed father of Jesus. Otherwise we cannot understand why the listeners should have cared so much to mention one by one the name of persons who were not directly related to his family. The theory of Jerome, followed by the Roman Catholic Church, that they were cousins of Christ can not be proved in any way. We do not deny that sometimes the Hebrew word for "brother" can have several meanings, but here the question of the language is excluded, because the evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and the apostle Paul have written in Greek, a language absolutely precise, and they have all called these supposed cousins "the brethren of the Lord." Did not they understand the distinction between the Greek term "anepsios" (cousin) and "adelphos" (brother) ? It is

impossible to believe such a thing when we know that Paul writing about Mark called him a cousin of Barnabas (Col. 4:10), while speaking about James called him the brother of the Lord (Gal. 1:19). How is it then that they were so confused about such an important matter? But, fortunately for the church of Christ, the confusion is only on the side of Jerome and Roman Catholics who wanted at all costs to build up the dogma of Mary's perpetual virginity.

Besides, we could ask our Catholic friends why Jerome, who advocated the theory of cousins instead of brethren, has translated in his Vulgate as brother and sister the same word that in Hebrew, he says, means "cousin" or something else? It is a fact that there is no ground for assigning to "brethren" the unnatural meaning of "cousins." Jerome's theory was his own private critical theory, unheard of until his time, and in later days declared even by himself to be doubtful (*Epistula ad Hedibiam*). It is astonishing that it should ever have passed for Catholic tradition.

On the basis of these considerations we invite Romanists to study the Bible without dogmatic prejudices, to interpret it according to the natural and logical meaning of the words, avoiding to confuse the issues with prefabricated traditional doctrines that are in disagreement with the Word of God. Mary's perpetual virginity not only is not based on the Scriptures, but is against them in many ways. The several passages quoted above show unmistakably that the mother of Jesus was a virgin only till the birth of our Lord and that the alleged virginity during and after the birth is nothing else than an imaginary creation of Jerome and followers. A Mary with children is not at all inferior to a Mary ever virgin; nay, according to the Jewish mentality of her time, the blessings of God to a woman were in direct relation with the number of her children. In view of this incontrovertible fact we must deduce that it was reasonable, scriptural, and holy for Mary to live with her lawful husband Joseph in a marital way, instead of creating fantastic tales that are hard to be believed by anyone. The illimitable exaltation of virginity above the marriage status was an idea completely unknown to the Jews and there is no ground in the New Testament to believe the contrary. It came into being only late

as an imposition rather than as a recognition. It was a product of tradition rather than the consequence of New Testament teaching. The earliest fathers of the Church never dreamed of interpreting "cousins" in the place of "brethren"; they had clear ideas about "the brethren of the Lord," because they lived in the footsteps of the apostolic traditions. In fact, the most reputable witness on the matter, Hegesippus, a Palestinian Christian Jew of the middle of the second century, in fragments of his writing preserved in Eusebius (Hist. Eccl., 2, 23) speaks of James as the "brother of the Lord" and of Jude "called His brother according to the flesh." Likewise Tertullian (180) plainly affirmed that the "brethren of the Lord" signified sons of Joseph and Mary, born after Jesus.

The fact that our Lord when on the cross commended his mother not to his "brethren," but to John does not imply that Mary had no other sons of her own, because we have already seen in John 7:5 that "his brethren did not believe in him" and therefore they were not there on that tragic hour. Jesus was near to die, and his mother was alone, desolate, without anyone who could comfort her; it was natural for our Lord to leave her in the care of his beloved disciple, who was standing with her at the foot of his cross, the only man available in that sorrowful circumstance. Besides, if the Catholic argument would be right we could for the same reason infer that John had no mother at that time, for Jesus said to him with the most clear language, "Behold thy mother," meaning Mary, and yet his own mother was there with him standing beneath the cross. Hence, how may Romanists exploit this simple and absolutely explainable event as an irrefragable proof in behalf of Mary's perpetual virginity?

After the resurrection Jesus converted his brethren, appearing separately to James according to the testimony of Paul (1 Cor. 15:7). We may see all of them in Acts 1:13-14 assembled together with the apostles, the women and the mother of Jesus in the upper room awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit. Later on Paul will testify about James calling him in all simplicity "the brother of the Lord" (Gal. 1:19) and recognizing him as one of the pillars of the Church together with Peter and John. He also will mention the other brethren as working in the Christian ministry: "Have we not

power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as the other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord?" 1 Cor. 9:5.

In conclusion it can be stated without any doubt that the theory of Roman Catholics about the brethren of the Lord is fundamentally wrong, because it can be supported neither by Scripture nor by history. It was suggested by the necessity of defending the invented dogma of the perpetual virginity of Mary and, consequently, all intelligent Catholics should refuse to accept both as a matter of faith. Will they have the courage to disclaim a doctrine which scriptural and historical investigation has proved to be untenable? We sincerely hope they will do so for the glory of God and their own personal salvation.

## **CHAPTER 11**

### **THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF MARY**

After having secured for Mary the belief in her perpetual virginity, Romanists went further on in their irrepressible enthusiasm to deify the mother of Jesus with the wondrous discovery of another privilege which was said to have been bestowed by God upon her soul at the very act of her conception, namely, the immunity from the stain of original sin. Such a belief received, in the course of time, the official name of Mary's Immaculate Conception and its doctrine is contained in the bull, *Ineffabilis Deus*, with which Pius IX in 1854 proclaimed to the world this new dogma of the Roman Catholic Church. In it, it is affirmed that Mary "in the first instant of her conception was, by a singular grace and privilege of Almighty God in view of the merits of Jesus Christ the Saviour of the human race, preserved exempt from all stain of original sin." It must be noticed that, contrary to a common error, the doctrine has nothing to do with the virgin-birth of Christ, which is an entirely separated doctrine (Incarnation); nor does it involve a virgin birth of Mary; she was conceived and born physically as any other person, only her soul was preserved from all the stain of original sin the very same instant of her conception, and that is when her soul was united to her body. In other words, unlike every other human being Mary was endowed with God's

grace at conception, instead of being conceived and born in original sin. She thus became the new Eve, free from all sin. This doctrine is said to be "revealed by God and therefore must be believed firmly and constantly by all faithful," so that if anyone should dare to deny it, he not only would commit mortal sin, but would be also automatically excommunicated for heresy. (A Catholic Dict., p. 260)

Contrary to the Roman Catholic claim that the belief in the Immaculate Conception "had always formed part of the apostolic faith," we may affirm fearlessly that this doctrine is neither scriptural nor apostolic and came into being very late as a result of the mariolatrous tendency of the Church of Rome. For at least twelve hundred years, in fact, the Immaculate Conception was unknown to the Christian world, and when, later, the doctrine began to be introduced most of the Roman Catholic theologians and saints were against it.

### **FATHERS AND SCHOLARS OPPOSE DOGMA**

Although the feast of Mary's Conception was not introduced into Rome till the end of the fourteenth century by the authority of pope Sixtus IV (1475), a festival in her honor was celebrated long before in several churches outside Italy. It was precisely at Lyons in France where this feast had its first appearance in 1140 and was vehemently opposed by Bernard as a novelty without the sanction of Scripture or of reason. Bernard is a canonized saint of the Roman Church and is considered to be one of the greatest fathers and scholars of all time. In spite of his tender devotion toward Mary, which merited him the title of Doctor Marianus, when he heard of this new festival he wrote an epistle of protest to the church of Lyons, wherein he said: "For this reason our astonishment is not small in seeing that some of you believed to be able to introduce a new feast that is unknown to the rite of the Church, that cannot be approved by reason, that is condemned by the ancient tradition." He asserted that the feast was founded on an "alleged revelation, which is destitute of adequate authority," and asked, "How can it be maintained that a conception which proceeds not from the Holy Ghost, but rather from sin, can be

holy? Or how could they conjure up a holy day on account of a thing that is not holy in itself? Do we pretend perhaps of being either more learned or more devout than the Fathers? Do not forget that it is a dangerous thing to wish to do that which their prudence decided that it ought to be omitted. If this were not a thing that at all cost ought to have been omitted, certainly in their diligence and accurateness they would not have omitted it." And he continued to argue in this way: "What other honor should we believe of attributing to Mary? That honor may be had, you say, for her conception, which was anterior to her birth, because without this (conception) neither the other (her birth) should be honored. But then, what would you say if others, according to this your own reason, were to maintain that it is necessary to hold feasts in honor of her parents. That, also, to be logical, then it would be necessary to honor even the grandparents, and great grandparents of Mary. And thus there would be no end at all; and thus there would be feasts without number; and thus the earth would be converted into a paradise... In reality, what logic is ever this, to wish to proclaim holy the conception of Mary because of the fact that it preceded her holy born? Perhaps the birth of Mary was holy because it was preceded by her conception? It is true: Mary was born because she was first conceived. How come that the conception of Mary had in itself the sanctity that should be transmitted to her birth? Or does not it not appear more just to say that Mary once conceived stood in need of sanctification whence to be born only, precisely because sanctity was missing at her conception? Better still do you prefer to say that the sanctity of the conception of Mary is derived from the sanctity of her birth? But this is evidently impossible; because one could understand how sanctity can pass from conception to birth, which is posterior, but one cannot understand how sanctity can ever be able to reverse itself from birth in a retroactive way to the anterior conception."

After having exposed many other reasons why this feast should not be celebrated, St. Bernard concludes: "In general we may say, that although to a few it was conceded to be born holy, to no one however was it granted to be conceived holy. So that for this reason sanctity of conception should remain the privilege of

one only, of Him that is, who, entering alone in the world without sin, had to purge all sin, and procure sanctity for all. Jesus Christ alone was therefore conceived through the work of the Holy Spirit, because he alone was holy before and after conception. Only He being excepted, all the others have to repeat the sad words that David used to say about himself: 'I was conceived in iniquity; my mother conceived me in sin.' And if this is so, for what reason will one want to celebrate the feast of conception?" (St. Bernard, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 1, pp. 390-391, or *Migne Patrology*, vol. 182, Col. 332)

Long before Bernard, St. Augustine, the greatest mind of the Latin Church, stated unmistakably: "He (Christ) alone, being made man, but remaining God, never had any sin; nor did He take on Him a flesh of sin, though from the flesh of sin of His mother. For what of flesh He thence took, He either when taken immediately purified, or purified in the act of taking it." (*De Peccato*, p. 61, Paris, 1690)

St. Peter Lombard, like Bernard, held that Mary contracted the stain of original sin: "It can be said, in fact, it must be believed, in virtues of the testimonies of the Fathers, that the flesh assumed by the Word, like all the flesh of Mary before the incarnation, was subject to sin; but afterwards, through the work of the Holy Spirit, was fully cleansed; such that at the moment of the incarnation it was immune from every infection of sin. The Holy Spirit not only cleansed the flesh assumed by the Word, but also completely purged Mary from sin...in such a manner that afterwards she had no inclination to sin." (*Converted Catholic Magazine*, December, 1951)

Most startling is the testimony of St. Albert the Great who, having written a lot of books about mariology, was called by the Roman Catholic theologians with the colorful title of "The Secretary and Writer of the Mother of God." Notwithstanding his profound reverence for Mary, this great doctor and saint of the Church also explicitly denied that the Virgin was immaculately conceived. "But this is asked on what account and whence it was, that she (Mary) was not conceived without original sin? We say that this was impossible, unless she were conceived of a virgin, and so

her mother became a virgin mother and this is not her privilege."  
(Mariale, Opera Omnia, vol. 37, p. 239)

Even Thomas Aquinas, who is considered the greatest scholar of the Roman Church, opposed the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception as derogating or detracting from the dignity of Christ. In his Summa Theologica he writes: "The blessed Virgin contracted original sin, although she was delivered from it later, because if the soul of Mary were not affected by that sin since she was conceived, it would derogate from the dignity of Christ, who is the sole and universal Saviour of all." (Part III, quest. 27, art. 2)

Of the same opinion also was the Seraphic Doctor, St. Bonaventure, whose authority on the matter is very valuable, he being a great theologian of the Franciscan School, which was led by Duns Scotus to be an outstanding advocate and defender of the Immaculate Conception. He openly taught that the sanctification of Mary followed her contraction of original sin at the time of conception, otherwise she could not be sanctified by the grace of God later; and that this was the most common, safe and reasonable doctrine of his time. (III Sentence, quest. 2, art. 1)

Another Roman Catholic scholar, Melchior Canus, who taught dogmatic theology at the University of Salamanca, Spain, and was a delegate theologian at the council of Trent, affirmed with the most surprising clearness: "The doctrine which holds that the blessed Virgin was free from all original sin is nowhere delivered in the Scriptures, according to their proper sense; nay, the general law which is delivered in them embraces all who were descended from Adam, without any exception." And continuing his merciless attack against the doctrine, he adds in direct contradiction to the bull Ineffabilis: "Nor can it be said that this doctrine has descended in the Church by Apostolic Tradition, for traditions of this kind cannot have come to us through any other persons than by the ancient bishops and holy authors who succeeded the Apostles. But it is evident that the ancient writers did not receive their doctrine from their predecessors." (De Locis, vol. 1, p. 337)

Finally, St. Antoninus, who was archbishop of Florence in the 15th century and a highly esteemed author, wrote: "If the Scriptures be duly considered, and the saying of the doctors,

ancient and modern, who have been devoted to the glorious Virgin, it is plain from their words that she was conceived in sin."

(Theologia, Part I, chap. 2)

The weight of the above statements by so many fathers and scholars was felt by the supporters of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, but the explanations given by the latter were not sufficient to remove a conviction which was based on the holy Scriptures. And indeed it is not enough to say that the doctrine was clearly believed in the early centuries, that it became obscure because of the hesitation of many saints and theologians of the Middle Ages and finally that it was clarified and defined as a revealed truth of God a hundred years ago. Such an affirmation must be supported by much better reasons if they want it to stand. The only Scripture quoted in the bull *Ineffabilis* in order to substantiate the dogma are Gen. 3:15, and Luke 1:28. After the fall of man, God said unto the serpent: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." It is evident here that the seed of the woman is rightly applied to Jesus Christ, but the Catholic (Latin) version of the Bible, in order to make a reference for Mary, reads *ipsa* (she) referring to Eve (Mary being the second Eve), instead of *ipsum* (it) referring to the seed (semen) which is according to the Hebrew. The inference is that if Mary had been chosen by God to bruise the head of Satan, she could not have done it in its fullness admitting that even for an instant she had been slave of the devil through the stain of original sin. In the other passage of Luke the salutation of the angel, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee," does not mean anything more than its literal sense does express. The same expression is used in the Scripture several times and has nothing to do with the exemption of original sin. Both passages are very weak and modern Catholic theologians easily admit that the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception cannot be proved by Scripture alone without the support of oral and written tradition. But in this case they are faced with the embarrassing problem of explaining the long and ponderous tradition against it.

## TESTIMONY OF THE POPES

Also the popes, who are supposed to be infallible, have united their voice in condemning directly or indirectly the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Let us look at the declarations of just a few of them:

Pope Leo I (440), who wrote a beautiful treatise on the doctrine of the incarnation, declared: "The Lord Jesus Christ alone among the sons of men was born immaculate." Thus excluding his mother from having the same privilege. (Sermon 24 in Nativ. Dom.)

Pope Gelasius (492), who condemned several heretical practices including communion under one species, transubstantiation, and others which were later accepted as good by his own Church, stated: "It belongs alone to the Immaculate Lamb to have no sin at all." (Gelasii Papae Dicta, vol. 4, col. 1241, Paris, 1671)

Pope Gregory the Great (590) considered as the outstanding pontiff of the first thousand years of the Roman Church, who extended the temporal power and wrote the famous "Dialogues" and an important book of homilies on the gospel, sustained: "For He (Christ) alone was born holy, who, in order that He might overcome 'this condition of corruptible nature, was not conceived after the manner of men.'" (Homilia in Nativitate)

Pope Innocent III (1216), who brought the papacy to its highest point of splendor and defined the doctrine of transubstantiation, asserted: "She (Eve) was produced without sin, but she brought forth in sin; she (Mary) was produced in sin, but she brought forth without sin." (De Festo Assump., sermo 2)

These few excerpts from the writings of the highest authorities of the Roman Catholic Church, together with the statements of the fathers and scholars, convincingly demonstrate that the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin is not at all a divinely revealed truth, but rather a controversial doctrine that shows the contradictory pronouncements of the popes and leaves the Catholics in a much confused situation. So that a very difficult problem is presented to them through this logical question: "Which pope spoke infallibly?" It is easy to understand the weight of the dilemma which is really sharp pointed. In fact, if they accept as a matter of faith or divine

truth the bull, *Ineffabilis Deus*, of Pius IX, then they are forced to refuse the teachings of popes Leo I, Gelasius, Gregory the Great and Innocent III. On the other hand, if they agree with the teachings of these earlier popes, they are compelled to declare that Pius IX was not infallible in defining the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary and, in this case, they incur the grievous punishments fulminated against the rebels with the following words: "Hence if anyone, which God forbid, should dare wilfully to deny or to call into doubt that which We have defined, let him know that he has fallen away completely from the divine and Catholic faith."

### **THE WORD OF GOD**

However there is a solution for the confused Roman Catholics, who are willing to find the truth and thus avoid further troubles for themselves, and that is, seek the answer in the Bible, in the true Word of God, which is both divinely inspired and revealed, and without contradiction. In this holy book, in fact, not only do we not find anything to substantiate the Immaculate Conception, but we do find many passages that are against it. The same passages from which they deduce the doctrine of original sin admit of no exceptions. From the Old Testament we have David, the sweet singer of Israel, who cries for himself and for all mankind, including of course Mary: "Behold I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." Ps. 51:5. And the patient Job saw no possibility for any human being of having a spotless thing from an unclean, when he asked: "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." 14:4. In the first book of Kings it is said explicitly: "For there is no man that sinneth not." 8:46. Moreover, David describes the corruption of a natural man repeating several times: "There is none that doeth good, no, not one." Ps. 14:3. Upon which promise, therefore, was Mary excluded from this original impurity or corruption?

In the New Testament Paul affirms without any exception that all have sinned: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Rom. 3:23-24. If Mary had been conceived

immaculate, she would have had no need of redemption thus frustrating the divine plan of salvation. The same apostle emphasizes the universality of sin in Rom. 5:12: "As by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men (including Mary), in that all (even Mary) have sinned." And again in 1 Cor. 15:22: "In Adam all die" Neither can it be said that the Virgin was conceived immaculate for a singular and gratuitous privilege of God, as the Romanists say, because such a privilege should be mentioned somewhere in the divine revelation. Besides, the idea that in consequence of her immaculate conception she became sinless or impeccable must be excluded also, because we read in 1 John 1:8: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." On the contrary it is true that all the prerogatives advocated for Mary can be applied only to our Lord Jesus Christ. He has been the only one to be conceived by the work of the Holy Spirit and therefore he is truly immaculate, sinless, and impeccable. He and he alone was free in every way from sin, and was so because he was "separate from sinners." Heb. 7:26. On this account St. Ambrose, another great figure of the Latin Church, proclaims: "Of all that are born of women, the Holy Lord Jesus was the only one who experienced not the contagion of earthly corruption by reason of the novelty of His immaculate birth." (De Peccato, Bened. Ed., Paris, 1686)

In conclusion therefore we may say that the dogma of the Immaculate Conception is unscriptural, unapostolic, and unacceptable, because it is contrary to the written Word of God, is against the early and late tradition of the Church and, finally, is also against reason. Until 1854 most of the fathers and teachers of the Roman Catholic Church were opposed to it, and later, only the fear of excommunication restrained others from protesting against a doctrine which is dangerously shadowing the marvelous light of the saving work of our Redeemer whose holy sacrifice was necessary for all of us as well as for Mary. That is why we invite our Catholic friends to abandon this useless dogma proclaimed by Pius IX alone without the consent of a general council and through the evident and sinister influences of Franciscans and Jesuits who wanted a dogmatic victory over the hated Dominican scholars, who

had continuously opposed the doctrine since its introduction, following the glorious path of Thomas Aquinas and Albert the Great. We would like to see all Roman Catholics make a courageous step and boldly refuse their superstitious belief in the Immaculate Conception. We would like to see them exalting and magnifying the Son in the place of the mother, and confessing that "Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Phil. 2:11.

## **CHAPTER 12**

### **THE ASSUMPTION OF MARY INTO HEAVEN**

Immediate consequence of Mary's Immaculate Conception is her bodily assumption into heaven. By another unique and extraordinary privilege, Romanists say, the Virgin's body was miraculously spared from the corruption of the grave and taken up by the angels of God into the glory of paradise. Invented toward the end of the sixth century such a story became, in the gradual process of transforming the humble mother of Jesus into a pagan goddess, an important belief of the Roman Church and when, lately, it was proclaimed a dogma of faith Catholics greeted it as the crowning jewel for their "Queen of heaven." In fact, according to them, in the crown of Mary's glory there was a missing jewel until the definition of that dogma on November 1, 1950. Pope Pius XII, after having consulted 1550 bishops, archbishops, and cardinals of the Roman hierarchy, proclaimed on that date, as universal teacher of the Church, that the bodily assumption of the Mother of God into heaven is an article of Catholic faith, thus adding to her crown the last missing jewel. So, a doctrine founded exclusively on tradition, marked by a complete absence of any document or reference in the first six centuries, result of theological and philosophical deductions based on false premises, was solemnly elevated and consecrated to the rank of revealed truths contained in the Bible. How a Church that claims to be infallible interpreter and custodian of the divine deposit of revelation could reach such an extreme position is hard to tell. Many learned Catholics are still shocked by a definition that seems to be in contradiction with the traditional procedure of their own

Church which has always appealed to Scripture in its previous dogmatic pronouncements. For this very reason the Roman hierarchy has even tried to change her view about tradition once based on the historical succession from the apostolic time on or vice versa. The answer given is that "historic proof of continuity back to apostolic times is not the only way to prove a tradition; proof enough can be found in the living belief of the present Church." (McVann, *The Assumption*, p. 9)

### **DOCTRINAL MEANING OF ASSUMPTION**

The doctrine of this new dogma holds that the mother of Jesus at the end of her earthly life was taken into heaven by divine power. It means that as soon as Mary died, she was granted the unique privilege of an anticipated resurrection. Instead of awaiting until the last judgment like the souls of the blessed ones, her body was reunited with her soul, and now is living in glory with her entire nature just as Jesus Christ does. In one of the earliest records concerning the Assumption Mary's body is described as being carried up in a cloud: "The Lord commanded that the holy body (of the Virgin) be taken up and carried in a cloud to paradise, where after rejoining her soul she now rejoices with the elect and enjoys the endless blessings of eternity." (Gregory of Tours) This description is very much akin to the legend of Romulus, the founder of Rome, who at his death occurred in 716 B.C. was said to have been carried up to the heavens in a chariot of fire, where he became a god and undertook the merciful business of dispensing graces and blessings upon his Roman followers, precisely as the Blessed Virgin has been affirmed as doing. It is no wonder therefore that all the privileges attributed to her have been proclaimed from the same city that Romulus built.

In the beginning, the feast of Mary's Assumption was celebrated under different titles, as Falling Asleep, All-holy Mother of God, Departure or Dormition, all meaning the same thing. In one of his sermons on the feast of the Falling Asleep of Mary, the patriarch Modestus of Jerusalem says: "O most blessed Dormition of the glorious mother of God, always a virgin, who never knew the decay of the sepulcher because our Almighty Saviour Jesus

Christ kept intact the flesh of which He was born . . . The most glorious mother of Christ our Saviour and our God, who gives life and immortality, was raised again by Him, shares incorruption with Him for all ages — with Him who reclaimed her from the tomb and took her to Himself, as He Himself knows, to whom be glory and empire with the Father and the Holy Spirit."

Roman Catholics are good enough to assure us that the doctrine of Mary's Assumption is not to be found either in the Scripture or in the early tradition of the Church. It is only a logical consequence of a false premise, namely that Mary was born without the original sin. The reasoning goes on as follows: in the ordinary course of life death comes to every human being as the result of Adam's fault. Christ conquered sin and death with his sacrifice of the cross, and those who through faith and baptism are born again have also, through Christ, overcome sin. However, even the bodies of the righteous are subject to corruption and only at the Last Day are joined again with their redeemed souls. But this was not the fate of Mary's body which was spared from corruption through a miraculous intervention of God. The doctrine of Assumption is therefore a direct consequence of the Immaculate conception of Mary. Because she was born without original sin her body could not possibly be slave of corruption, death being precisely imposed as a punishment of that sin. Pius XII in defining the dogma explains it in this way: "Now God has willed that the Blessed Virgin Mary should be exempted from this general rule. She, by an entirely unique privilege, completely overcame sin by her Immaculate Conception, and as a result she was not subject to the law of remaining in the corruption of the grave, and she did not have to wait until the end of time for the redemption of her body."

### **JUSTIFICATION FOR THE DOGMA**

In order to justify the definition of a doctrine that has neither scriptural nor historical support, the Roman Church has been forced to produce by necessity some theological reasons of expediency. Pope Benedictus XIV listed them as follows: "The dignity of the Mother of God, her excellent virginity, her surpassing holiness beyond that of men and angels, her close union

with Christ her Son, and Christ's own regard for his most worthy mother." The theologians say that these five reasons can be synthesized into one, Mary's divine motherhood. In this respect, Thomas Aquinas argues: "By the fact that she is Mother of God, the Blessed Virgin has a certain infinite dignity from the infinite good that is God." A position such as this makes Mary a unique creature, and allows the conclusion that she could not have been likened even at the time of death to other human beings. In his Mariology (vol. 2, ch. 8), Father Matthias Sheeben considers the Assumption under this very aspect, saying that Mary was exempted from the dominion of death, from the decomposition of her body, and, finally, from the separation of her soul from her body.

As to the first point, Mary really died. "But because of her freedom from sin, the universal law of death touched her in a different way than it affects those who sin. Her death was painless, an act of love, a conformity to Christ, a true 'falling asleep,' a 'temporary retreat from bodily life.'"

Second, Mary's body escaped corruption. According to Father Sheeben, "there is something noble in death; but decomposition is at best shameful, a last earthly remnant of the curse of sin. For reasons analogous to those of Christ, bodily decay was entirely out of keeping with Mary's dignity and place. Just as she enjoyed incorruption of her virginity at the conception of her Son, at His birth, and in the absolute sinlessness of her emotional life, so now she enjoyed bodily incorruption. St. Andrew of Crete had written, 'As the womb of her who brought forth the Redeemer remained ever incorrupt, so likewise her dead body never perished.'"

Third, the last consequence of Mary's exemption from the dominion of death was the assumption itself. The reasoning is presented in this way: "Of the work of redemption the first outcome was the bodily resurrection of Christ, as the perfect victory over evil; and the ultimate outcome will be the bodily resurrection of all the just at the end of the world. Mary, like a second Eve undoing the harm of the first, shared in that redemptive work of her Son. She shared in it not only as a beneficiary but also as its chief human instrument; and furthermore, an instrument

whose work of mediation would go on in heaven. In a manner her part likened her more to Christ than to the other redeemed. So her own resurrection should be more like her Son's—not postponed to the end of time." (The Assumption, pp. 27-30)

However, the theological inferences reached by Romanists have no foundation whatever on facts, they are only based on expediency or fitness. "It was fitting," they conclude, "that Mary's body, the instrument of her divine motherhood, should share in the heavenly life of her soul." But, it is evident that the addition of many such reasonings cannot bring forth any serious proof. On the contrary, we can affirm without fear of being mistaken that the dogma of Assumption is against Scripture, against tradition, and against the Catholic dogma of papal infallibility.

### **ASSUMPTION CONTRADICTS SCRIPTURE**

Although Romanists readily concede that the dogma of Assumption cannot be proved with the Bible, yet they say that it is not against it. To disprove such an erroneous position it is enough to quote Ps. 16:10, in which David prophetically speaks about the future resurrection of Jesus Christ: "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hades; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One see corruption." To no other human being was ever made such a promise, not even to Mary, as Catholics claim. In fact, Peter, quoting later this very passage in his sermon of the Pentecost, affirmed in unmistakable terms that only to Jesus Christ was given the unique privilege to be raised up from the death (Acts 2:30-31). No provision was contemplated for others. As a matter of fact, the apostle Paul excluded peremptorily any exception when he said in 1 Cor. 15:21-23: "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." Until the second coming of Christ therefore no one can expect an early resurrection like that asserted for Mary. This is the provision established by God for all human beings. How could Mary be exempted from similar destiny? The alleged Assumption of the mother of Jesus however fitting it may be for the Roman

Church, is not at all scriptural; nay, it is against God's plan as revealed in the Bible. As such it should be repudiated by all Catholics of sincere faith and open mind exactly as it has been done by the distinguished convert Robert Speaight who wrote to the London Tablet, on the eve of the proclamation, a powerful protest against defining the Assumption of Mary an article of faith.

### **ASSUMPTION AGAINST TRADITION**

Not only is the doctrine of Assumption against Scripture, but it is also irreconcilable with the facts of history. For many centuries, in fact, it was unknown to the fathers, and when insinuated in the Church it was discovered to be a result of an apocryphal book. In the fifth century there was spread among Christians an apocalyptic story that claimed to be "An Account of St. John the Theologian of the Falling Asleep of the Holy Mother of God." It was also called the Departure of Mary. In such a novel are told wondrous and extravagant things that happened at the death of Mary, whose body is affirmed to have been raised up from the dead and translated by the angels to heaven in order to be reunited with her soul. Even Romanists say that the book is apocryphal and perhaps the work of a Gnostic. Nevertheless, a few credulous bishops, like Gregory of Tours (596) and Modestus of Jerusalem (635), presented the apocryphal story as a matter of revelation and unfortunately it was accepted as such by the following superstitious generations until the papal definition of 1950 put on it the irrevocable seal of faith. However, the dogma contradicts openly the old tradition of the Roman Church whose attitude was well expressed by the monk Sophronius when he wrote from Jerusalem about Mary: "Many of us doubt whether she was assumed together with her body or departed without her body. How, or when, or by whom her most holy body was taken from there, or where it was taken, or whether it rose again, is not known." Still in the ninth century St. Ado, in his Martirology omitted purposely to mention the feast of Mary's body because, he says, that the Church prefers to ignore the matter "rather than to teach anything frivolous and apocryphal by holding it." It is evident that the Roman Church in defining the new dogma reversed or contradicted itself, and has been forced to change its

traditional teaching on tradition by inventing the peregrine theory that the Church does not need any more "an unbroken chain of historical proof that a tradition existed all the way to apostolic times; that adequate evidence for a dogma is its acceptance throughout the Church of a given age."

To this may be added the following consideration: how is it possible to believe that the Assumption of Mary is a truth revealed by God when the apostle John to whose care Jesus left his mother and in whose house most likely she died, did not give us any hint about such a stupendous miracle that at the distance of 1950 years would have become an article of the Catholic faith? He wrote a gospel, three letters, and the book of Revelation or Apocalypse after Mary had already passed away from this world, and yet he did not write a line to record such a marvelous event. Can we suppose that such a wonder as the bodily assumption of Mary into heaven would have been purposely omitted by the inspired writer when, later on, the faithful would celebrate the miracle with gorgeous ceremonies and profound devotion? We leave these unanswered questions to the clever imagination of our Catholic friends.

### **ASSUMPTION AGAINST PAPAL INFALLIBILITY**

Finally, the dogma of Assumption destroys the fundamental principle upon which Romanists base the infallibility of the pope. In the Vatican Council it was established that "the Holy Spirit was not promised to the successors of Peter that they might make a new doctrine, but that by His assistance they might religiously guard and faithfully expound the Revelation of the Deposit of Faith which has been handed down from the apostles." Now, in the definition of the bodily Assumption of Mary into heaven, a new doctrine has been created and a new dogma imposed on the faithful without support either from the Scripture or from tradition. In this respect, Father McVann candidly says that "to find adequate justification for the Assumption in Scripture is impossible. Both John Damascene and Thomas Aquinas say that it is not contained there. . . The history of the doctrine in the age of the Fathers shows no record of a belief for six centuries; then a tradition marked in

the Church's simple acceptance and in its worship, but confused because of the disrepute of an apocryphal account; then the unruffled account among the last of the Fathers." Can such sources justify the new dogma? Is there any warrant to allow the definition of an article of faith? And yet the Roman Catholic Church in spite of subverting its previous dispositions concerning apostolic tradition and papal infallibility, has proclaimed as a matter of belief a doctrine that marks a serious departure from the Bible and is derogatory of the glory and worship due to Jesus Christ alone. For this reason we earnestly hope and pray that our Catholic friends will recognize that the Assumption of Mary is indeed a man-made doctrine and, consequently, has nothing to do with their loyalty to God and to Christ, the only one who had been raised up from the dead according to the Scripture, and through whom we may have assurance of our future resurrection in the end of time.

## **CONCLUSION**

In the haste of bringing to an end the present book we have perhaps missed giving more stress to the practical side of our personal evangelism among Roman Catholics, emphasizing in its stead the doctrinal differences that divide the Church of Rome from the followers of the Word of God. While this could be taken as a lack or defect on our part, we must candidly affirm that we have done it rather intentionally because we believe that there is no better method in religious evangelism than to clarify, above all, the controversial issues that constitute the fundamental cause of misunderstanding. Naturally we feel that clarification is only possible through a detailed exposition of both sides of the problems in discussion, and this we have tried to do according to the best of our ability. However, in the introduction we have presented several suggestions concerning the gradual steps that we have to take in order to approach successfully our Catholic friends. It is not our intention therefore to repeat ourselves, but we would like to add a few more things to those already said, hoping and trusting that our efforts in winning Catholics for Christ may be rewarded with gratifying results.

## **RIGHT ATTITUDE**

First, in teaching our friends we should be sure to have the right attitude and disposition. Very often our failure in converting them can be blamed on us rather than on them. Perhaps we did not have the right attitude and did not study enough the practical situation, the disposition of the people and their need. Sometimes a method good for one is not satisfactory for another, a lesson used in one occasion can be obsolete or untimely in a different one. Jesus Christ preached in one way to the Samaritan woman and in another to the adulteress. He did not give to Nicodemus the same lesson that he gave to Zacchaeus. The apostle Paul did not teach the Athenians in the same way he taught Lydia or the jailer. So, let us try to understand the character and inclinations of the different people and teach them the right things with the right attitude.

## **LOVE FOR HUMANITY**

Second, let us have and show genuine love for humanity. Nothing can bring us closer to our fellow-men than to show them our sincere love and interest for their souls. There is neither a greater nor more efficacious appeal in the world today than the love for others. This is, however, one of the most essential commandments in the Bible: "Love thy neighbour as thyself." The gospel message is nothing else but love. The stories of the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan have always exercised a tremendous appeal on the hearts of men. So, let us have a working love toward others, and especially toward those whom we want to convert. Let us help them even at our own cost, even making personal sacrifices in their behalf. Like Jesus we should be ready to say: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." John 15:13. If we are willing to suffer and even to die for the spiritual salvation of our friends then we will do everything in order to convert them.

## **WISDOM**

Third, let us be wise in discussing with people, choosing the words we have to say and the doctrine we have to expound. We

read in Prov. 25:11-12: "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver. As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprovor upon an obedient ear." Sometimes we rush ourselves saying things which should be said in a different way or in a different time. We must be sure that people are mentally prepared to receive our lesson, otherwise they will turn away from us or reply to us with unpleasant or tricky words. Jesus told us to be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." Matt. 10:16. Oftentimes worldly people use more intelligence and wisdom in their businesses than we do in our work for Christ. Let us therefore have prudence and wisdom in our personal evangelism in order that we may avoid Christ's warning: "The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." Luke 16:8.

### **GRACE AND GENTLENESS**

Fourth, let us have grace in our speech exactly as the apostle Paul suggested to the Colossians (4:6): "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." Harsh discussions are to be avoided as well as offensive remarks, but in all humility and understanding, smiling even when cursed, teach with gentleness and patience. To his beloved disciple Timothy Paul did recommend the very same thing: "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will." 2 Tim. 2:24-26.

### **GOOD EXAMPLE**

Fifth, let us spread a sweet-smelling odor of holiness around us. If we really want to convert others we must first convert ourselves to a life of obedience, love and self-denial. The lesson of good example is the best talk we can ever make. Our evangelistic success is to a great extent depending on our own behavior. As Christians we ought to set a good example in all the manifestations

of our interior and exterior life. That is why Paul warned us: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." Eph. 4:29. However, good example does not mean frigidness or legalism, it is the fruit of our wholesome dedication and consecration to our Lord Jesus Christ through faith and love. Being the temple of the Holy Spirit we ought to live a godly life, a Christlike existence in order that others may see in us the transforming power of the gospel. Only then shall we be able to teach and answer the questions of our friends according to Peter's admonition: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." 1 Pet. 3:15.

If our personal work of evangelism is based on such principles as those suggested above we can be sure that our Lord will bless our efforts in a truly providential way and we shall be comforted with abundant and lasting results.

## **POSTSCRIPT**

### **A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT TO OUR CATHOLIC FRIENDS**

We have presented to you, dear friends, some of the best known tenets held by your Church. We have tried to be fair in exposing the doctrinal side of the problems at hand, having in mind to show you the inconsistencies between the Word of God and the traditional dogmas of Romanism. Perhaps, sometimes, in the enthusiasm of the discussion, our pen has been too strong in condemning or tearing down doctrines built up by men in the course of the centuries. Our sincere love for the truth has put in our mouth at times satiric remarks, ironical expressions, positive statements that to you may seem unfair, dogmatic or authoritarian. We may assure you, dear friends, that this has not been done intentionally, and we are ready to apologize for any misstatement or incorrectness that we have made, for any offensive word that we have written, because we love you with the same love of Jesus Christ. All our efforts have been centered in finding the truth

regardless of the different opinions of men and, consequently, we have used all means in our possession in order to reach a definite conclusion for each doctrine, according to the inspired records contained in the Bible. We have discarded by principle any authority of man and accepted as means of discrimination and criterion of truth the revealed Word of God. We cannot find in this world an authority greater than that of God, and therefore in any conflict between man's authority and God's authority we have chosen the latter and repudiated with firmness and eagerness the former even when vested in the person of the pope or of the Church. There cannot be contradiction between God and his church, if there is, it simply means that the great apostacy foretold by Paul in many of his letters has changed the church into a man-made organization, and therefore it is no more the church of the Lord.

Being sure of such a truth we invite you, dear friends, at the end of your first reading of this book, to read it again and without prejudice, in case your mind is still doubtful; and, after having given to each problem a more serious consideration, decide frankly whether Romanism or Christianity is the answer to your quest for truth. We ask you for the sake of your eternal salvation to shake from your shoulders, once and for all, the unbearable burden of papal inventions and impositions in order to become a free child of God, after having believed and confessed that Jesus Christ is your personal Savior and Mediator and after having been buried with Him in the water of regeneration.

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