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the
Bandwagon!*



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by

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GET ON THE BANDWAGON!

by

RICHARD GINDER

GUESS which is the biggest Church on earth! The Catholic Church. Guess which is the oldest Church on earth! Right. The Catholic Church. There must be something to it if it's lasted through 1900 years; it must have something worthwhile if it has more members than any other Church in the world—if it was able to add 87,000 converts last year, grownups, who came in only after thinking things over very carefully.

Now, if it were only an insurance agent, who could tell you that his firm had been in business longer and had more satisfied customers than any other

insurance company — well, then, you'd stop to take a second look, don't you think?

We Catholics believe in being good neighbors. We never stoop to mud-slinging, certainly, but there is no harm in comparing the Catholic Church with Protestant Churches, is there?

SCRATCHED OFF THE SLATE

Perhaps you know what the word Protestant means. It comes from the word "protest," because each Protestant body got its start by making a protest against some teaching in its mother-church.

For instance, King Henry VIII of England wanted the Pope to give him a divorce from his wife Katharine, so that he could marry Anne Boleyn. The Pope couldn't do it, so Henry protested and started a church which would give him a divorce: the Episcopalian Church. A few centuries later, John Wesley, an Episcopalian minister, protested against the way his church held its services, and

started the Methodist Church. Some of them protested again, and split to form the Methodist Protestant Church, while the rest called themselves the Methodist Episcopal Church. Each new organization started with a protest. You can see, then, that each founder just took the Catholic slate and scratched off an item or so. Henry VIII scratched off one of the main points, when he claimed that Christ never meant one man to rule the whole Church of God. The later rulers of England scratched off many another item, of course. Then the Methodists took up the same slate and rubbed out what they didn't like. The Methodist Protestants did away with a few more beliefs, and so on.

NOTHING TO LOSE

What does this mean? Simply that in the Catholic Church you'll find everything you have in your own Church, with more besides. We have the original slate. You never had a chance to examine the protest of your Founder for yourself. You're depending on his opin-

ion, for the Protestant churches believe or, must we say, have the opinion that what each man wants to believe is a matter of his own opinion. It's up to him to decide.

You see, the Catholic Church believes—mind you, it believes, and surely you won't object to our telling you what we believe—well, the Catholic Church believes that Jesus Christ, God, came to earth and set up an organization for the preaching of His Gospel; that He left His own statements on earth, and if you differed with them, He was right, and you were wrong. Jesus picked out one man, St. Peter, and made him head of this organization, giving him authority, power to rule and teach, to watch over His organization as a shepherd keeps his flock. For 1500 years practically all Christians were Catholics and all Catholics were Christians.

In 1517, Martin Luther differed with the ancient Church and told the world: "I'm right and the Church is wrong."

That was new, for Jesus had promised His everlasting guidance to the Head of His Church. St. Peter, it must be said, had gone to Rome, the capital of the world at that time, and his successors as Head of the Church had come to be called Popes, from "papa," the Italian word for father.

HE BROKE STEP WITH JESUS

Anyway, here was this ex-priest telling the Pope that he was wrong, that the whole Christian Church had been "off the beam" for centuries. He was smart enough to see that if he could call the Pope wrong, then any other man in the world could do it, too, so he went on to say that religious beliefs are a matter of personal opinion: that things are right when you think they're right. A strange thing about Martin Luther was that he got very angry when anyone had the opinion that he, Luther, was wrong. As a matter of fact, Protestants of today still insist that religious beliefs are a matter of private opinion, except

when private opinion leads one to think that the Catholic Church is right.

Meantime, the Catholic Church went on, the same as always, maintaining that Jesus Christ declared His mind on religious beliefs in clear, strong language, that the ancient Church was the only officially appointed teacher of His religion, that she was the sole copyright owner of the Bible and that whoever differed with her differed with Jesus Christ.

That's why the Catholic Church never changes. Her business is to keep Christ's teachings from change. She may change in little things, like the size of the candles she uses, or the depth of the lace on her altarcloths, but in the main points, the important things, she's just the same as she was when Christ left her watching His ascent into Heaven, centuries ago.

Do you believe in Almighty God? We believe in Almighty God. Do you believe in heaven and hell? We believe in heaven

and hell. Do you believe in Jesus Christ? We do too. Do you believe in the Bible? We wrote it. Do you believe in the Atonement? So do we. Do you believe in the Holy Spirit? So do we.

You'll find most probably that you're not giving up anything by becoming a Catholic—anything except that peculiar privilege of believing that religious affairs are matters of opinion. A Catholic differs from a Protestant mainly in just that: a Catholic takes the word of his Church as expressing the mind of Christ. A Protestant reserves to himself the right to condemn the whole Church when it differs from his personal opinion.

EVERYTHING TO GAIN

In moral matters, it's pretty much the same thing. We all believe in the Golden Rule, in doing to others as we would have them do unto us; in keeping the Ten Commandments; in frequent prayer to Almighty God.

In worship, we have something for everyone. We have a beautiful ritual,

carefully elaborated, with dignified ceremonies carried out by priests in rich vestments, with organ and choir in the background, and the perfume of incense hanging over all. We have the Solemn High Mass for those who love the courtly functions of God's palace; and we have the Low Mass, for those who prefer to worship God in quiet simplicity. We have evening services in which the priest merely guides the meditation of those kneeling around him in the lengthening shadows.

But we have so much more than Protestants have. We haven't yet shown you what the Protestant Founders scratched off the list.

First of all, there's the Mass; there isn't room here to tell you much about it, excepting that it's a sacrifice far better than any offered by Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob. It's an act of perfect adoration, sublime, unearthly, visited by hosts of angels and archangels.

We have Jesus Christ in our churches, body and soul, blood and bone, just as

He was with His Apostles on the green hills of Galilee. He's never left us. Hasn't it ever seemed odd to you that the Protestants of today should be worse off than the Jews of the Old Testament? They had God in the cloud by day and the pillar of fire at night, His presence was over the Mercy Seat; they had the Ark of the Covenant. But Protestants have—nothing at all as good as that. Well, we Catholics have something much better than all those things. We have Jesus on our altars where we can call on Him. We can tell Him our troubles, and make little prayers of friendliness. What's more, we can receive Him into our hearts in Holy Communion.

SO MUCH MORE

Besides, we have the forgiveness of sins. "Whose sins ye shall forgive," Christ told the Apostles, "they are forgiven them." We still have that Apostolic forgiveness of sins. If you'll drop into any one of our parish churches on a Saturday evening, or on the night before a

religious holyday, you'll see Catholics gathered there for the purpose of having their sins forgiven.

We have kept the ideal of marriage as a lifetime agreement between a man and woman for the purpose of rearing and educating a family. We keep sex where it belongs—in marriage, and no place else.

We have prayers for the dead. After you have died, your soul will be remembered in the Masses, prayers, and good works of millions of Catholics—because we believe in purgatory, a place where the less perfect are purified and prepared for heaven. “As the tree falls, so it lies,” you say. But what if it should fall between heaven and hell? That's why we Catholics have purgatory: we feel, most of us, too imperfect for heaven, yet not bad enough for hell.

NO “DINKY” LITTLE CHURCH

We're not trying to gather you into some “dinky” little church, some religion no one ever heard of before. We're

only trying to show you that the Catholic Church is worth looking into.

May we ask, in fact, what Church you now belong to? May we ask if it's likely that God wanted that Church to be the instrument of His salvation in this world? If so, is your Church spread all over the world? Shall you find one of your ministers in Bizerte, in Tunis, in Manila, in Marseilles, in Geneva? We know you'll find priests there.

If your Church was the Church Christ founded, where was it for 1500 years? Why is it so small even now? Isn't it logical to suppose that the biggest Church is the one God has been helping through the years?

You may think that if you were to investigate and get at the truth about the Catholic Church, you might turn Catholic. That's quite true. We very much suspect that that is precisely what would happen. The attraction of Christ's Church is so powerful that, once you've heard of that Church, and learned some little of the truth about her, you're al-

most bound to be drawn in, that is, unless you keep fighting the attraction.

Would you lose your freedom of thought? What freedom? Freedom to doubt, to worry, to toss in perplexity and be forever wondering whether you're believing the right thing, and doing the right thing? Yes, you would lose your freedom to go against the mind and teaching of Christ. But that's just the kind of freedom you don't want. You want to be bound to Christ with hoops of steel. You want to cling to Him. You want nothing to tear you from Him, in this life or the next. The Catholic Church will help you forge those bonds—if you'll let her.

As a Catholic, would you have direct contact with Christ, or would you have to depend on a priest? As a Catholic, indeed, as a baptized Christian, you would have God always in your heart, not only bodily, as in Holy Communion, but spiritually. He would be there, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, always consoling you, always bearing you up and giving you

strength for the difficulties of life. The priest places Jesus on the altar; he forgives the sins which keep you from Christ; and, remember, what he does, he does because Jesus wants things to be that way. It was Jesus who organized the Church and arranged the setup as it works today.

COME ON HOME!

Come back to the ancient Church. We want to share our blessings with you. Why travel along in some obscure little Church, locked up in one corner of the world, when you can have the oldest, the biggest and, may we say, the best, for the asking? Why try to get along with only a part of Christ's teaching, with a scratched-up list, when you can have the whole slate, as Jesus first wrote it?

Your ancestors were on the earth before the time of Martin Luther, so they must have been Catholics. Everybody was in those days. Why should you be different? If it was good enough for your forefathers through 1500 years, isn't it good enough for you?

Don't mind what people might say. You have your own soul to save, and you'll have to speak for yourself on Judgment Day. They won't be able to help you then. You may have to suffer a little embarrassment for the sake of Christ, but you're a man, we know, and you can take it. Besides, "No cross, no crown," and the comforts of your new-found faith will far outweigh the trials.

Go to a priest. Just ring the doorbell at the Catholic rectory. After that, things will work themselves out. If you're shy, ask a Catholic friend to go along with you. But go. Don't delay. And start praying right now. Say an Our Father every night that Our Lord will help you to find the right Church; that He will show you the Catholic Church as He sees her. You can't go wrong if you pray that way.

*Lord, if I am right, Thy grace impart,
Still in the right to stay.*

*If I am wrong, then guide my feet,
To find a better way.*



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