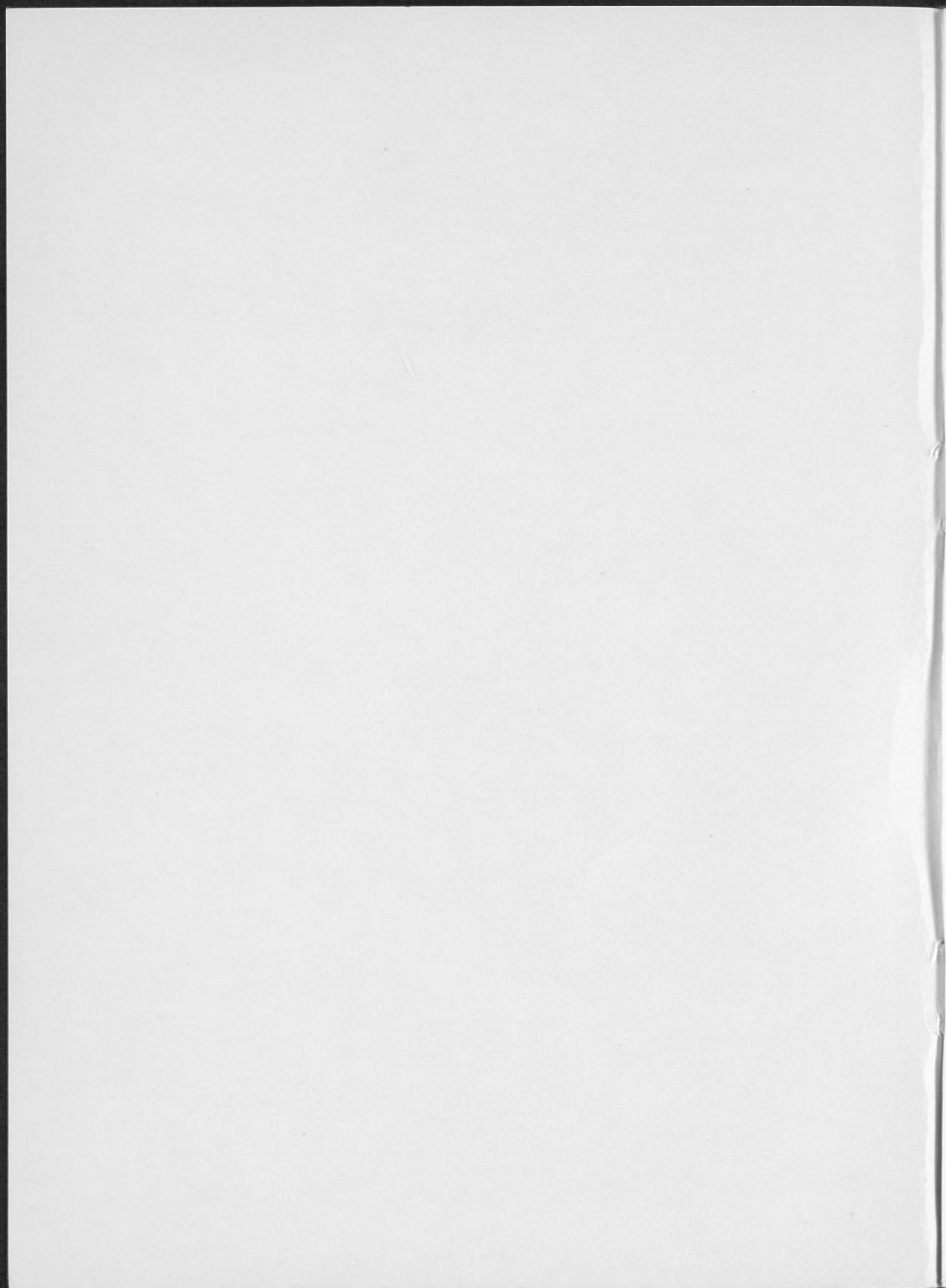


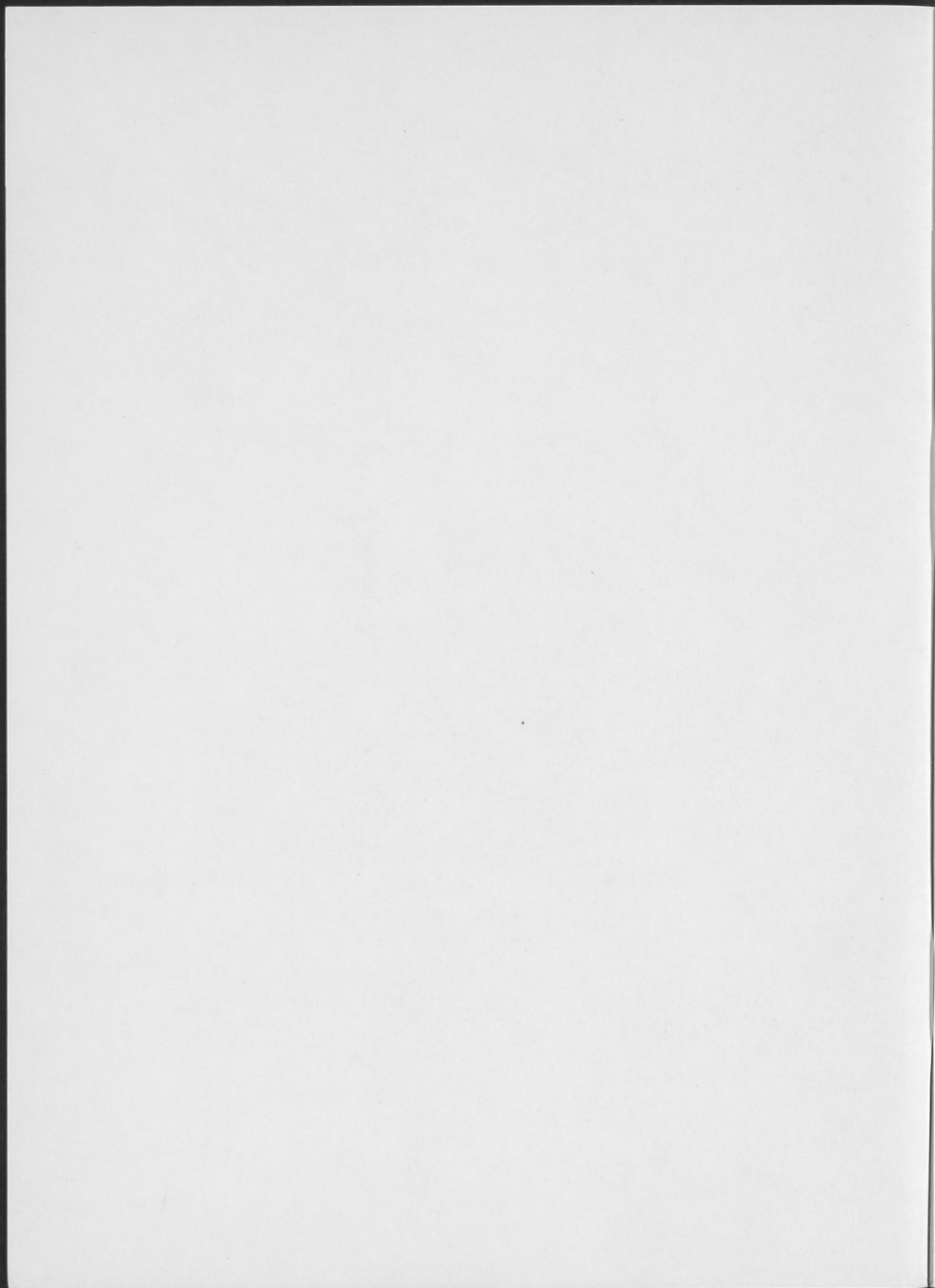
Arnold, Robert
- The advantages...
ADJ0627

THE
ADVANTAGES
OF BEING A
CATHOLIC

By ROBERT ARNOLD



The Advantages
of Being a Catholic



Price 12.00 net

THE
ADVANTAGES
OF BEING A
CATHOLIC

By ROBERT ARNOLD

**The Advantages
of Being a Catholic**

Published by

DUBLARINE PUBLISHING COMPANY

MINNAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

FIRST EDITION

All rights reserved. This book may not be reproduced in any
manner in whole or in part without the permission of the publisher.

Copyright 1955 by Dublarine Publishing Company, Minneapolis, U.S.A.

DUBLARINE

The Advantages
of Being a Catholic

Declassified

Price 35 cents

THE
ADVANTAGES
OF BEING A
CATHOLIC

By ROBERT ARNOLD

Published by

BELLARMINÉ PUBLISHING COMPANY
MOUND, MINNESOTA

FIRST EDITION

All rights reserved. This booklet may not be reproduced by any means in whole or in part without the permission of the publisher.

Copyright 1955 by Bellarmine Publ. Co. Printed in the U.S.A.



To Rt. Rev. Msgr. William L. Mulloney,
Rector of St. Joseph's Cathedral
Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Benefactor and dear friend.

**Dedicated in a spirit of friendship to
peoples of all religious faiths and to
those who have no religious affiliation
in the cause of truth and mutual un-
derstanding.**

Nihil Obstat: R. G. Bandas, Ph.D., S.T.D. et M.

Imprimatur: ✠ John Gregory Murray, S.T.D.
Archbishop of St. Paul

February 3, 1955

FOREWORD

To many Americans the Catholic religion poses a great and implacable mystery, this despite the fact that Catholic Churches are everywhere about them, despite the fact that Catholic people are numbered among their closest friends and relations and despite the fact that the Catholic religion, its tenets and practices, is very much an open book. The real mystery is that it should be regarded as a mystery at all; for anyone can learn all there is to know about the Catholic religion if they but set aside the rumors in favor of a personal inquiry or two in the right places. That is what Mark, college senior and one of the principals in our story, found out. Maybe his story is your story in which case the following narrative should prove very illuminating. If not illuminating then certainly entertaining, because here is typical American youth in a typical American situation discussing a controversial subject with typical American candor. Fictional though the characters may be you are bound to enjoy their company.



FOREWORD

To many Americans the Catholic religion poses a great and impenetrable mystery. This begins the fact that Catholic Churches are everywhere about them. Despite the fact that Catholic people are numbered among their closest friends and relations and despite the fact that the Catholic religion, in extent and practice, is very much an open book. The real mystery is that it should be regarded as a mystery at all. For anyone can learn all there is to be known about the Catholic religion. They can see inside the mystery in that of a personal inquiry or two in the right place. That is what Mark Twain said and one of the principals in our story found out. Mark Twain's story is your story in which case the following narrative should prove very illuminating. It not illuminating then certainly entertaining because here is typical American youth in a typical American situation dealing a conventional subject with typical American customs. Fictional though the characters may be you are bound to enjoy their company. If it seems to you that



IT WAS FREEZING COLD that particular Sunday morning—typical of Minneapolis weather in January. And to add to the discomfort of those who dared to venture forth from their domiciles fierce little gusts of snow laden wind buffeted the city from all directions, wind that chilled right to the marrow of a person's bones.

Certainly it was a most illogical day for a drive to the country.

But the fraternity friends, Bob and Mark, would not be dissuaded. They had been looking forward too long for the opportunity this day afforded: Bob's Uncle Nils had written him several weeks before that if he and Mark could make it to the farm this week end he would show them "the best ice fishing in the whole state of Minnesota"—and Bob's Aunt Julia promised one of her famous chicken dinners into the bargain.

Besides, what was a little wintry weather to a couple of linemen on the University of Minnesota's varsity football squad, to a couple of robust young Minnesotans who naturally relished the outdoor life? To them it was just another brisk winter day—the kind of day ice fishing was at its best on the lakes.

So at the crack of dawn they were on their way, taking it cautiously at first because the main hazard on a day like this was the city streets which were always icier than the country highways. There was also another city hazard as they soon found out:

"Hey! Look out for those people coming out of that church!" Mark warned his companion behind the wheel.

Bob had noticed them through the snowy mist at the same

instant and was already easing down on the brake pedal, careful lest the car should slide out of control on the glazed pavement. Deftly he brought the car to a halt at a safe distance from the crossing in front of St. Joseph's Church where they waited for the people, young and old, with coat collars pulled snugly up over their ears, to pass.

Bob and Mark did not mind the interruption. It was an intriguing spectacle, this early morning display of faith they had happened upon. The people were funneling out of the beautiful Gothic structure in a seemingly endless stream, obviously conscious of the inclement weather but just as obviously defiant. They had been to Mass, that was the important thing. Now they would return to the comforts of their homes, the day made complete.

At least that was how Bob interpreted the mood of these people. Bob had turned Catholic himself a few years before. He knew what motivated people who have the Catholic faith. In fact he might have been one of this very same congregation had he not gone to an earlier Mass.

But Mark, who was a Protestant, was affected differently. To him there was a certain incongruity here that drew a big blank. Of course he admired the "raw courage" of these Catholics, but that mysterious something which underlied it all, that was what he could not fathom—and he did not mind saying so:

"Beats me!" he exclaimed in a flabbergasted tone of voice.

"What beats you, Mark?" Bob inquired as he put the car in gear and proceeded down the road again.

"The popularity of the Catholic religion," Mark said bluntly, "these overflowing Catholic Churches, this loyalty which manifests itself even before sun up while the rest of

Christendom sleeps. Tell me, Bob, what is the big attraction? What does the Catholic religion have to offer that other denominations do not have? I honestly don't know of any other denomination that could induce their members to turn out en masse at this time of day and in this kind of weather—unless perhaps for a very special event—certainly not for just an ordinary church service.”

Mark did not feel that such questioning was treasonable to his own religious convictions. He considered it a perfectly normal curiosity and one that he had noticed in many other Protestants, even in some ministers, though in a more restrained and guarded way. Once he heard a minister remark in his sermon about “the *phenomenon* of the Roman Catholic Church.”

Bob did not answer immediately. The frankness of his friend's query had caught him very much by surprise. “I know what you mean,” he said at length. He was thinking back to his own pre Catholic days. “But I am afraid it is a question that cannot be answered in just a few words. Catholicism is not as simple as that. There is really nothing complex about the Catholic religion but it is a big subject nevertheless. Like the U.S.A. is a big country Catholicism is a big religion, and like the U.S.A. many things contribute to her greatness—and each one needs a little explaining. However, if you *really* want to know and are willing to give me the time . . .”

Mark thought of all the time they had on their hands during the trip ahead of them. “Fire away!” he invited.

Bob glanced admiringly at his companion out of the corner of his eye. No wonder Mark chose to major in Science at the U., he thought, the guy just has to know what makes

things tick. Someday he would be a famous scientific personage.

"Well, one aspect of the Catholic religion which inspires great loyalty in her members," Bob began, "is the *antiquity* of the Church. According to history Catholicism is the oldest Christian denomination in existence, and that, in the mind of the Catholic, constitutes one of the greatest proofs of the divine character, the *Christian authenticity* of the Catholic Faith.

"What has age to do with authenticity? Quite a lot once you think it over. Take a painting claimed by its owner to be an authentic Rembrandt, for example. Before the owner could convince the critics that it is indeed an authentic Rembrandt he would have to establish beyond a reasonable doubt that its *age* corresponds to the interval of time between Rembrandt's day and the present. It might have all the surface characteristics of the genuine article but unless its age can be proven the art critics will declare that it is at best nothing more than a well executed *copy*. The same would be true of a manuscript purported to be written by the hand of Shakespeare, or a violin attributed to Stradivarius—their age would be a major factor in determining their authenticity.

"Catholics feel that the same rule applies to the Church founded by Christ: if the genuine article is in the world today, and He solemnly promised that it would be, then the best way to distinguish it from the *copies* is to establish its singular antiquity."

Mark turned and gazed critically at his friend. "Yes, I know Catholics believe their's is the oldest Christian denomination," he interrupted, "but some Protestant denominations claim that they can trace their history back just as far, in some instances even farther. And what about the Coptic Church of

Egypt and the Greek Orthodox Church?—they claim that they can trace their existence all the way back to the Apostles.”

“Making such claims is one thing, *proving* such claims is something else again,” replied Bob. “Observe that the Catholic Church can show where her name, her teachings and her government is mentioned with almost monotonous frequency in the preserved writings of the primitive Christian era. The letters of Polycarp who was a disciple of the Apostle John, for example: he signed them: ‘Polycarp, Catholic Bishop of Smyrna.’ Then there is a letter by Ignatius of Antioch addressed to the Christians of Smyrna in the year 110 A.D. wherein he wrote: ‘Where the Bishop is there let the multitude of believers be; even as where Jesus is, there is the Catholic Church.’ The Catholic Church can also show in the historical records of subsequent centuries bountiful evidence of her continual, uninterrupted growth from the primitive Christian era up to the present time, proving beyond any vestige of doubt that the Catholic Church of primitive times and the Catholic Church of today are *one and the same* Church.

“The other claimants to apostolic origin, on the other hand, can furnish no such evidence to back up their claims. Nowhere in the records of primitive Christianity are they mentioned, either by name, by doctrine or by activity. On the contrary, history is quite explicit in placing the origin of the Coptic Church in the fifth century A.D.; the origin of the Greek-Russian Orthodox Churches in the ninth century A.D.; the origin of the Waldensian Church of Italy in the eleventh century A.D.; and the origin of the first Protestant denominations in the sixteenth century, A.D. Look in any popular encyclopedia, Mark, and see for yourself if this is not true.”

Mark thought it over. “Come to think of it, I never have

run across the names of those other denominations in primitive Christian history, but I have run across frequent mention of the words *Catholic* and *Pope*."

Again Mark indulged in a little deep meditation. "Alright," he said at length, "I will grant that the Catholic Church is the *oldest* Christian Church. However, I still fail to see why an older Church is necessarily a *better* Church. I don't see why someone well versed in Sacred Scripture and eager to do Christ's bidding cannot organize in our own day and age a denomination just as thoroughly Christian as one organized many centuries ago. After all, the main objective of Christianity is to preach the Gospel, to convert sinners to Christ. What difference does it make whether this is done by an old denomination or a new one?"

They were out in open country now and the safer driving conditions permitted them both a greater freedom of thought.

"It makes a big difference!" Bob answered very matter-of-factly, "because it stands to reason that the older a church is the more time it has had to study the Scriptures and all the other evidence of divine revelation; hence the more *learned* it will be in what constitutes the Word of God. A good example of this truism can be seen in the evolution of Protestantism: the theology of the older Protestant denominations covers a considerably wider range than the theology of the newer ones; whereas the older denominations—Lutheran and Episcopal—cling to a goodly measure of traditional Christian dogmatics, the newer ones—Baptist, Pentecostal, etc.—have a pared-down theology which amounts to little more than an emotional 'brother are you saved?'—and all of them claim a resolute devotion to the Bible, all of them claim they are doing the bidding of Christ.

"However, be that as it may, it is not the main gist of my argument. With all due regard to the sincerity of their convictions and aspirations the newer Christian denominations could not possibly measure up to the oldest one, even if they preached the Word of God in its fullest and purest essence—a very important element would *still* be lacking."

Mark shook his head disdainfully. "And this important element, what might that be?" he inquired. Catholics were given to making some awfully arbitrary claims, he thought to himself, but this was the most audacious one he had ever heard.

"I realize that what I have just said sounds disgustingly presumptuous, Mark," Bob said sensing his friend's feelings, "but let me explain: We have established that the Catholic Church is the *oldest* Christian Church, have we not? Should we not therefore also conclude that the Catholic Church is the *original* Christian Church?"

Mark pondered for a moment then replied: "Yes, that is a reasonable deduction. Either the oldest is the original or the original has ceased to exist."

"Precisely! and since Christ pledged that the original would *not* cease to exist, saying, 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against my church', it would be foolhardy for any sincere Christian to believe that it has ceased to exist."

Bob looked inquiringly at his companion. "Do you see what I am getting at? Since the Catholic Church is the oldest Christian Church and therefore the original Christian Church, it naturally follows that she is the only Church *personally* founded by Jesus Christ, the only denomination *personally* commissioned by Christ to carry on His ministry of salvation in the world. That is the special something I had reference to when I stated that no matter how faithful the newer Chris-

tian religions might perchance be to the Gospel of Christ they still could not compare favorably in every way to the Catholic religion."

Mark was still disposed to argue the point. "I follow your line of reasoning, all right," he responded, "but it seems to me that your hypothesis overlooks two possibilities: the possibility that Christ's true Church was not constituted as a visible, *human* organization, but as a spiritual union of *all* Christians, regardless of denomination; and the possibility that the human founders of Protestantism might have been *inspired* by God, that God might have founded the Protestant family of churches too, indirectly, using mortals as *instruments* of His Divine Will."

Bob smiled. It was like hearing a playback of his own thoughts recorded years ago when he too was debating the issue of Catholicism. "No, Mark, my 'hypothesis' as you call it does not rule out the possibilities you mention—but sacred Scripture certainly does. Concerning the first possibility, observe that the Apostles and their disciples were very definitely a visible, *human* organization. Further, note in Luke 10:16 that Christ told His followers they were very definitely *subject* to the authority of that human organization. Did not Christ say, 'He who refuses to hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen?' Matthew 18:17. One could not very well *hear* a spiritual church now could they?

"Elementary logic also rules out the possibility that the Church Christ founded is a spiritual union of believers embracing all denominations; because how can the various denominations constitute a *union* of believers, spiritual or otherwise, when it is precisely for the reason that they are divided in belief that they are separate denominations?"

"Well, I must admit that the beliefs of the various Protestant denominations vary, some of them quite radically," conceded Mark.

"Concerning the second possibility, Christ would have contradicted himself had He inspired Luther and the others to create separate, independent Christian denominations. For He declared very categorically that His Church would consist of 'ONE fold and ONE shepherd.' John 10:16. As added insurance against a split in the ranks of the faithful He petitioned God the Father for the preservation of unity. John 17:22-23. Why was Christ so insistent on one fold? Because, as He had previously pointed out: 'A house divided against itself cannot stand.' Mark 3:25. If His Church was to stand, and He guaranteed that it would, it would have to remain *undivided*.

"It is inconceivable, therefore, that after having gone on record as an unremitting foe of disunity, Christ would condone even a minor schism within His Church, much less inspire the creation of hundreds of rival bodies and conflicting doctrines such as characterizes Protestantism."

Mark did not want to admit it but the reasonableness of Bob's argument was undeniable. "All right, so Catholics have the satisfaction of knowing that theirs is the only church which qualifies as *the* Church founded by Christ." He made it sound more like a courtesy than a concession. After all, origin may be important but it wasn't *everything*.

"Now tell me," queried Mark, "what *other* advantages do Catholics enjoy?"

Bob motioned to the glove compartment. "How about getting the thermos bottle out and pouring us a little hot coffee first."

"Good idea," Mark agreed cheerily.

After a couple of swallows of the stimulating drink Bob continued: "What we were just discussing contained a hint of another advantage enjoyed by Catholics, Mark, and, I might add, a very great advantage. It is an advantage, moreover, which I don't think you will be so apt to challenge me on—it is simply too obvious."

Mark laughed. "Don't be too sure that I won't challenge you," he chided. "I feel in a challenging mood."

"I have reference to the *unity* of the Catholic Church," Bob said. "And by unity I *don't* mean a bond of sympathy, a loose kind of fellowship between heterogeneous groups, but real honest-to-goodness unity: unity of belief, unity of membership and unity of authority. In short, Catholics are ONE in the strictest sense of the word—all 460 million of us—whether located in Europe, Africa, North America or South America—whether in Timbuctoo or Minneapolis, Minnesota.

"Why do Catholics attach so much significance to unity? Why do Catholics believe that their unity gives them a distinct advantage over other Christians? Well, for one thing it means that God's Will is being done. That is the primary satisfaction. But there is another satisfaction of a more personal nature: the satisfaction of being a member of a *real* world brotherhood.

"To illustrate: suppose I should journey to some remote corner of the globe, *any* remote corner of the world, and desire to worship in the local Catholic Church. Would I have any fear that the faith and worship of that Church might differ in some respect with the faith and worship I am accustomed to? Would there be a likelihood that this was not the same Church I belonged to back in the States but a *branch*, or a

type, of the same Church, like one of the Lutheran Synods of the U. S. is a type of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany? No! If it is a Catholic Church it is the same Catholic Church I belong to, the same Church, the same faith, the same priesthood, the same worship; of that I could be absolutely certain. The skin of the other worshippers might be a different color and the clothes a different fashion but we would be members of the same spiritual household—under the skin we would be brothers who share identically the same faith, loyalties and aspirations. Under no circumstances would I have the feeling that I was among strangers.”

Mark had been listening intently. “That *would* be very gratifying,” he averred. “I went with my family on a vacation trip to the deep South a few years ago and I remember how disappointed I was when we attended church services and found it so different from church services back home. The reason for the difference, I found out later, was that the church there came under a separate jurisdiction—the same denomination but a separate board of governors. And I don’t mind admitting that I felt very much a stranger.”

“Something else worth remembering, Mark,” Bob continued, “is the historical fact that unity has *always* characterized the Catholic Church. *Never* have Catholics been partitioned off from one another by national or continental boundaries, by upheavals either from within or from without. That is what Catholic means—*universal*—and certainly no one can say the Church has not lived up to her name.

“Sure, there have been attempts to divide the Church. On a number of occasions ambitious, power hungry individuals have challenged the authority of the Pope and endeavored to set themselves up as head of the Church; but invariably they have

failed. Invariably when it appeared that the unity of the Church was in jeopardy the world wide episcopate, clergy and laity rallied around the true Pope leaving the imposter the alternative of either recanting—which most of them did—or going his own separate way as a schismatic or apostate.

“Nor is there any reason to believe that Catholic unity will diminish, or even falter, at any time in the foreseeable future. In fact the evidence points to an even *more perfect* unity in the centuries to come; for Catholic fervor, the spirit of sacrifice and esteem for the Pope and all he represents is definitely on the increase. Witness the sacrifice of millions of Catholics behind the Iron and Bamboo Curtains in defense of their faith. Christian heroism like that hasn’t been seen since the days of the Roman persecutions. And witness the utter failure of the Communist regimes to nationalize the Catholic Church in their respective countries, to divert the loyalty of their Catholic citizens away from the Pope to someone appointed by them. Certainly if anyone ever entertained any doubt about the invincibility of Catholic solidarity the example of the Church today should remove that doubt.”

“Yes, there is a solidarity among Catholics which is certainly without equal,” agreed Mark. “And I must confess I have always secretly admired that aspect of Catholicism—no quibbling over doctrines, no membership competition, no bickering over who is to have the final say—it is an ideal situation. No wonder the Catholic Church has made, and is still making, such great progress; for without the distractions of internal disorder she is free to concentrate on the main objectives.”

Mark felt a little conscience stricken then for having thrown such a big bouquet of verbal flowers Catholicism’s

way. The best way to redeem himself, he thought, would be to throw a similar bouquet Protestantism's way.

"Catholic unity is indeed a remarkable thing and a fine Christian attribute," continued Mark, "however, let us not forget that there is a movement, gaining momentum all the time, toward unity in the Protestant Church. Who knows, maybe we will see in our lifetime a unity within Protestantism that will compare favorably with the unity of the Catholic Church. Then Catholics won't have that particular advantage over other Christian denominations, will they?"

There was a note of triumph in Mark's voice as he said this and he turned confidently to face his companion, eager to hear the response.

Bob reflected for a moment, then said: "I am aware of the movement you speak of, Mark. I think it is called the *Ecumenical Movement*. And, believe me, I hope it succeeds, because if Protestantism can unite the eventual uniting of all Christendom will be that much farther along. However, if you will pardon my pessimism, I am afraid there is little prospect of its succeeding, either in our generation or in any future generation. And that, incidentally, is an opinion, a pessimism, shared by many leaders of Protestantism themselves."

Mark turned his head the other way in a gesture of disparagement.

"Let me point out a few of the obstacles in the way of a united Protestantism," Bob said. "First, in order to achieve *true* unity all of the Protestant denominations would have to merge into a *single* denomination; they would have to completely overhaul their governmental structures to conform to the new constitution. That would mean that the great majority of the existing denominational heads would not only have to

change their methods of procedure, which in itself would meet with considerable opposition, but many of them would have to step down from their high places and accept subordinate positions. Whereas before they were the rulers, in the new scheme of things they would be among the ruled. You can imagine how they would like that.

“But what would pose an even greater obstacle: the various denominations would have to submit to a *theological* overhauling: each would be obliged to embrace some strange new doctrines and reject some cherished old ones, because unless they did there would not be uniformity of belief which is the thing most essential to true unity. In the minds of most Protestants, particularly the old timers, that would be a terribly high price to pay for unity. It would mean that the basic tenet of Protestantism—freedom to interpret Divine Law and worship as one pleases—would have to be abandoned. Worse than that, in the eyes of every *militant* Protestant it would mean a *betrayal of conscience*, a sort of *mass apostacy*.

In other words, Mark, you don't indoctrinate millions of people with a particular theology and teach them to cherish a particular tradition and then refashion their thinking at will. The clergy in particular—they are, for the most part, theological diehards who would not bend unless crushed under an avalanche of God's grace, and God would not send such superabundant grace unless it was wanted, unless they were willing to admit that maybe they have been entertaining some false precepts after all.

“And, mind you, I am not touting for Catholicism when I say that. If anything I am touting for Protestantism—exploring the possibility of Protestant unity.”

"I understand that," Mark said. He had been carefully weighing and measuring everything Bob said.

There was a moment of thoughtful silence, then Mark volunteered to voice his conclusions: "It does seem that the Ecumenical Movement's chances of producing within Protestantism a unity comparable to that which prevails within Catholicism is very remote," he observed. "I certainly cannot, for example, conceive of the Lutherans and the Episcopalians giving up their liturgical forms of worship to please the Baptists and Methodists; or the Baptists and Methodists accepting the dogmatic norms of the Lutherans and Episcopalians."

The whole idea of Protestant unity suddenly became an enigma to Mark which he could not for the life of him unscramble. "In view of the futility of the situation, which certainly must be as apparent to the leaders of Protestantism as it is to us, what reason can they have for pushing the Ecumenical Movement?" he inquired. "There *must* be a reason! They are not doing it just to pass the time of day!"

"Very simple," Bob offered. "They are pursuing the *ideal* of unity without due regard for its practical application. And they do not feel that their efforts will be *entirely* futile because if they only succeed in achieving a more harmonious, cooperative relationship between the denominations they will have accomplished much to strengthen the position of Protestantism in the world. The Ecumenical Movement is, therefore, to them a worthwhile undertaking, even if it does belie its name."

"Still, mere cooperation is no substitute for real bonafide unity," averred Mark.

"I'm sure Christ would not accept it as a substitute," Bob said. "When Christ called for 'one fold and one shepherd' He

meant just that, not a cooperative arrangement between a great *assortment* of folds and shepherds. The same goes for the Apostle Paul when he told the primitive Christians that they were called in 'one body, one faith, one spirit, one baptism.' Ephesians 4:45. Paul's words can hardly be construed to mean anything but *absolute* unity—the *kind of unity which distinguishes the Catholic Church*.

Mark smiled in agreement. "Alright, you have made your point," he said. "Now what do you say we get on to the next advantage enjoyed by Catholics—that is, if there are any more." Mark was beginning to find their little discourse ever more intriguing.

Bob's enthusiasm was mounting too. It was wonderfully gratifying, he mused, to be able to speak candidly on the delicate subject of religion and in such a spirit of objectivity. He just hoped that candor and objectivity would mark the next phase of their discussion as well, for now he was going to touch on an aspect of Catholicism considerably more controversial.

"Another advantage Catholics believe they have over other Christian denominations and which definitely is the source of much of the Church's great strength and vitality, Mark, is the *scope* and *orthodoxy* of Catholic doctrine. Most other denominations—all Protestant denominations—have a very restricted version of what constitutes the Christian way of life. Believe in God, read the Bible, believe in the Messiahship of Christ and have faith that through His Blood He has redeemed us from our sins and you will have fulfilled all that is expected of a Christian, they teach. A few teach the necessity of baptism and a few teach that 'the Lord's Supper' makes an edifying repast; but for the most part faith in Christ as

Personal Savior is all that is mandatory, all the religion we need in order to secure our eternal salvation.

“The Catholic Church, on the other hand, reaches in and draws from the Sacred Scriptures, and the Gospel narrative in particular, a lesson applicable to practically every phase and circumstance of human conduct, so that Catholicism can truly be called, not just a Christian religion, but a Christian *way of life*. Belief in the Triune God, the Messiahship of Christ and all it implies is, of course, the central theme of Catholic belief, but the Church teaches that in order to receive the *full* efficacy of those beliefs it is necessary to supplement them with the other lessons contained in Divine Revelation.”

Bob was conscious that Mark was eyeing him with an expression of incredulity and suspicion. “I know—you have heard that a large part of Catholic doctrine has no Scriptural basis. You may even have heard it said that the Church, fearing ‘exposure,’ discourages her members from reading the Scriptures. But, believe me, such accusations are a lot of hog-wash and completely untrue. It is an old bugaboo the enemies of the Church employ to frighten people away from her.

“For Catholic doctrine is as firmly rooted in Sacred Scripture as Christianity itself. Nowhere is the Bible honored more or used more than in the Catholic Church. During Mass a Missal containing the Sacred Scriptures is read aloud by the priest, then kissed by the priest as a sign of veneration and respect for the Word of God. At High Mass the Gospels are incensed along with the other sacred objects on the altar. And not only are priests required to read and meditate on the Scriptures privately for about an hour every day of the year, the Church rewards the laity with a 300 day grant of Indulgences every day they read and meditate on the Scriptures for at least

fifteen minutes. Now I ask you, does that sound like the Church has little regard for the Bible as her critics allege?"

"Sounds to me like a very high and reverent regard for the Bible," Mark replied, astonishment written on every syllable. It was amazing, he thought, how little he really knew about the Catholic religion, how little most Protestants know about it.

"Several dogmas of the Church are not mentioned in the Bible by name," continued Bob, "a coincidence that befuddles most non Catholics and which no doubt makes it easier for them to believe all of the vicious rumors concerning the Church's attitude toward the Bible; but if they would only stop and think, neither are several doctrines they believe in mentioned in the Bible by name—the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation and the Resurrection, for example. The important thing, as any thinking Christian should realize, is whether the *outline* of a doctrine is contained in the Bible, either explicitly or implicitly; and if a person will examine the texts of the Bible thoroughly, without the mental impediment of past prejudices, he will find that Catholic doctrine is outlined there just as clear as day."

At that moment a pair of pheasants glided across the road perilously close to the car. Mark's hunter instinct prompted him to unload two quick shots at them with an imaginary shotgun.

Then he unburdened a series of questions that had been accumulating in his mind: "Sounds convincing, Bob, coming from you; but you know me—I am like the people from Missouri—I have to be shown. Take all the great ado Catholics make over the Blessed Virgin Mary, for example; what justification is there in the Sacred Scriptures for that? And the

teachings of the Catholic Church concerning Purgatory, confessing to the priest and the Infallibility of the Pope—where do you find those things mentioned in the Bible?”

Bob smiled his satisfaction. These were questions he had both expected and wanted Mark to ask.

“Glad you asked me,” he said. “First, concerning the great honor and tribute Catholics bestow on Mary, it is to be observed in the Bible that God himself bestowed on her great honor and tribute, that by selecting her for His own Mother, by appointing her the *Media* through which Salvation would come into the world, God favored her as no creature has been favored by Him before or since.

“Now I ask you, can there be anything wrong in following God’s example? Are not true Christians obligated in conscience to give great honor and esteem to what He has given great honor and esteem? But of course.

“Then there is a question of gratitude for what Mary has done for us. After all she did lend her body as a dwelling place for the Incarnate God for nine months, succor Him during His infancy and watch over Him most tenderly until He was ready to manifest His Messiahship. After all, it was she who gave Christ the Flesh and Blood He offered on the Cross for the Redemption of the world. *No one rendered Him a greater service than that.* And who profited by it? Why you and I and all Christianity, of course. The least we can do by way of gratitude, therefore, is to show her a profound love and veneration.

“But why *worship* her? Why *pray* to her?” Mark demanded.

Bob could not hold back a laugh. “There is that old bogey again,” he said. “Boy there have been some awfully distorted

versions of Catholic belief foisted on the public but the one labeled *Mary worship* is, without a doubt, the classic of them all.

"Mark, get this straight in your mind once and for all," Bob said getting down to cases, "Mary is *not* worshipped by Catholics in the sense you use the word. I have never worshipped her as a diety, I have never observed any other Catholic worshipping her as a diety and I know for a fact that the Church does not teach that she should be worshipped as a diety. Whatever prompts the Church's critics to make such an accusation is beyond me. For, get this, if any Catholic, whether lay person or high ranking prelate, gave divine worship to *anyone* other than God they would be branded a heretic and summarily excommunicated from the rolls of the Church. Only divinity is entitled to divine worship says the immutable law of the Church, and Mary is *not* divine; she is a human creature, a very exceptional human creature to be sure but a human creature nevertheless. Check in any Catholic catechism or book of Canon Law, Mark, and see for yourself if this is not the case."

"Alright, so Catholics don't worship Mary," Mark said apologetically. "Apparently I have been grossly misled on that score. But, Bob, you cannot deny that Catholics pray to her. How do you explain that?"

"Concerning the Catholic practice of praying to Mary, that can be easily explained. I think you will find it most reasonable and thoroughly Christian. Turning to the Bible let us note that the Christian Church, properly defined, is a *body*, the head of which is Christ, the members of which are all the faithful. 1 Corinthians 12:27 and Colossians 1:18. Now concerning this body, the Church, it follows does it not that she

who is the Mother of the Head of the body is also Mother of the members of the body? To say that she is not would imply the preposterous: that the Head is not connected to the body. The relationship of Mary to the Church, therefore, is inescapable: if we are truly *one* with Christ, united to Him in His Church, His Mother must be regarded as our Mother also—*our spiritual Mother to whom we should go in prayer for spiritual aid and comfort.*”

Mark had been seriously considering everything Bob said. “Yes, I can believe that by virtue of her being the Mother of Christ, by virtue of the fact that she gave birth to our Salvation, she is also the spiritual Mother of the whole Church. Christ inferred as much when He pointed out Mary to the Apostle John and said: ‘Behold thy mother.’

“But,” Mark remonstrated sharply, “I still fail to see the need, the justification, for praying to Mary when we can just as well go *directly* to Christ! After all, Mary, for all her wonderful attributes, is still a human creature—she has no supernatural powers or prerogatives. It would seem, therefore, that prayers offered up to Mary, prayers soliciting spiritual aid from her, is both a waste of time and an affront to God.”

Bob veered the car to avoid a patch of ice on the road, then replied: “You are quite right when you say Mary has no supernatural powers or prerogatives. Catholics are very much aware of that. And permit me to inform you that the great majority of Catholic prayers *are* offered up directly to God. But when you say prayers offered up to Mary are a waste of time and an affront to God you are very very wrong, because she can help us through her *intercessary* powers, that is, through her *influence* with God. She can do nothing for us independently but she *can* intercede before the throne of her Divine Son in

our behalf and her Divine Son will not turn her down. *The God who issued the commandment 'honor thy mother' would certainly not turn a deaf ear to the pleas of His own Mother.*

"As for God being offended when we pray to Mary, that is preposterous. Would He give the Church a mother if He did not expect the Church to go to her for a mother's aid and comfort? Of course not. Rather He would be more offended if the Church did not go to her, for no one likes to see a mother ostracized by her own children, least of all God; and that applies, of course, to spiritual children as well as flesh and blood children."

Mark's air of resentment had given way to wide-eyed, open mouthed surprise. "Do I understand you correctly: when Catholics have recourse to Mary in prayer they are not asking spiritual favors from her but asking for her *assistance* in obtaining spiritual favors from God—like a boy enlisting his mother's support in getting something from his dad? In other words, when Catholics pray to Mary they are, in affect, praying to God *through* Mary?"

"That is exactly what I mean, Mark," Bob replied. "That is the Church's teaching on the subject pure and simple."

"Well that is more like it!" exclaimed Mark visibly relieved. "I see nothing unreasonable, nothing *heretical*, about that! In fact it seems the natural thing to do. Strange that I was never able to see it that way before."

"It just goes to show you how easily an incomplete picture can produce false impressions," explained Bob.

"Now how about the Catholic doctrine of Purgatory?" Mark asked enthusiastically.

"That too reveals itself as a most reasonable and thoroughly Christian doctrine once all the facts are known. And I

mean facts that can be gleaned from the Bible. The word Purgatory does not appear in the Bible, of course, but that is a very minor detail. I have already pointed out that the common designation for many Christian doctrines do not appear in the Bible. The important thing to establish is: can it be shown that the *place* Catholics call Purgatory is mentioned in the Bible?"

"I'll be darned if I can find it mentioned in the Bible," opined Mark.

Bob laughed. "I must confess it is difficult to find, Mark, especially when one has a vague conception of what Purgatory means—but it is there nevertheless as you shall see.

"Purgatory, as you may know, means a place of *purgation*. It is a place where souls go for purification, a sort of probationary period to be served out before they are entitled to enter heaven. We find clear references to such a place in several Scripture passages. For example, in 1 Corinthians 3:13-15 the Apostle Paul declared that some people, despite an imperfect life, will be 'saved, yet so as through fire.' Paul could not possibly be referring to hell because once a person arrives there salvation is lost to him forever; and he could not possibly be referring to heaven because in heaven a person is already saved. He must, therefore, have reference to a place of purgation somewhere *in between* heaven and hell. Again in Hebrews 12:23 Paul states that heaven is inhabited by two kinds of souls: 'the Church of the firstborn' and 'the spirits of the just made perfect.' The Church of the firstborn can only mean those whose great holiness entitled them to *immediate* entrance into heaven and the spirits of the just made perfect can only mean those who had to make some reparation before they were acceptable. Otherwise why the distinction? Again

in the Greek Septuagint Version of the Old Testament there is a passage which says 'it is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins.' II Machabees 12:46. Obviously the dead Machabees has reference to are not in hell for in hell the dead cannot be loosed from their sins, nor can they be in heaven because in heaven there is no sin. Where can they be then if not in a *third* place, a place where souls are neither lost nor altogether saved?"

It was still beyond Mark's comprehension. "But, Bob, we are *all* sinners! None of us lead *perfect* Christian lives. The Bible makes that very clear. If what you have just said is true, therefore, we are *all* destined for Purgatory, or to hell. No, I cannot accept that!"

Bob had half expected this reaction. "Give me time to elaborate," he replied. "Of course we are all sinners! And of course it is possible to attain heaven without first spending some time in Purgatory. The teaching of the Church is very clear on that score. The Church teaches that no matter how sin stained our souls may be, if we repent and make proper atonement for our sins before we die, God in His Mercy will forgive us and remit the punishment, making it possible for us to enter heaven straightway. It is for those who at the time of death *still* have a blotch on their souls, who have not made proper atonement, who must go either to Purgatory or to hell—to Purgatory if their sins are minor ones, to hell if their sins are serious ones. Because as the Apostle John pointed out: '*Nothing defiled shall enter heaven.*' Revelations 21:27."

Mark pondered for a moment before commenting. "In other words—if I understand you correctly—God feels that some people deserve another chance; He feels that while they are not good enough for heaven they are still not bad enough

for hell—so He sends them to Purgatory to get straightened out.”

“That is the idea exactly.”

“Well I must say, that sounds only fair,” Mark said. “Come to think of it our society here on earth bases its conception of justice on the same principle: when a man is brought to trial in a Court of Justice and found guilty of a minor offense he is not acquitted along with the innocent, nor is he condemned to life imprisonment along with the serious offenders, but rather he is given a punishment commensurate with the minor offense—*temporary confinement*. The temporary confinement our Courts of Justice metes out to the minor offenders against our earthly society corresponds to the temporary confinement in Purgatory God metes out to those guilty of minor offenses against Him.”

“A very good analogy,” complimented Bob. “So you see, Mark, justice demands that there be a place of purgation in between heaven and hell. We would have to conclude that such a place existed even if there was no specific reference to it in the Bible. For justice is justice, whether in this life or in the next life.”

Mark took a package of peppermints from the glove compartment, offered one to Bob who declined, then put one in his own mouth. “Now that I see the doctrine of Purgatory in its proper perspective it *does* seem necessary that such a place should exist,” he said. “For some reason or another I never looked at it that way. Like most Protestants I have simply tossed it off as another example of arbitrariness on the part of Catholic theologians, a sort of superstitious holdover from the Middle Ages. Obviously I have been wrong.”

"Now how about auricular confession to the priest—explain that for me," Mark said.

"Auricular confession, called the *Sacrament of Penance* in the Catholic Church, is one of the most obvious teachings of the Bible, Mark," Bob said. "In the Bible Christ said to the Apostles in the plainest possible language: 'Receive ye the Holy Spirit; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.' John 20:22-23. To Peter whom He described as the 'rock' upon which he planned to build His Church Christ said: 'Whatever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.' Matthew 16:19.

"In view of these clear cut statements no one who believes in the Bible can really deny that Christ gave to His Apostles the power to forgive sins. Nor is that the real controversy. The controversy apparently revolves around the *disposition* of this grant of power *after the Apostles were gone*. Did Christ mean that the power to forgive sins was to be exercised by the Apostles alone? or were their successors in the Church to have it also? Those are the questions we will want answered in order to validate, or invalidate, the Sacrament of Penance.

"However we need not look far for the answer—no farther than the same Bible. There Christ himself supplies the answer and does it so articulately there can be little room left for doubt. After His Resurrection Christ gathered the Apostles together and in the most unequivocal tone of voice told them that their mission was to "teach all nations *whatsoever I have commanded you.*" Then He told them not to worry about the obstacles that would confront them in the execution of their

mission because He would be with them 'all days, *even unto the consummation of the world.*' Matthew 28:19-20.

"Does that sound like a temporary arrangement to you? Does that sound as if Christ was addressing a small group of men who would soon be gone from the world taking their ministerial authority to the grave with them? No! Obviously He was addressing not one generation of humans but *the human nucleus of His indestructible Church*; because it would be impossible for the Apostles alone to teach 'all nations' and the Apostles would not be around 'until the consummation of the world.' Obviously the directive to teach 'whatsoever I have commanded you' did not allow for any exceptions."

"I see what you mean," Mark said: "If the Church did not inherit the authority to hear confessions and forgive sins from the Apostles then there is no reason to believe the Church inherited any other authority—authority to baptize, confirm, ordain, etc.—because Christ delivered *all* authority to be exercised by the Christian ministry to the Apostles. If the Sacrament of Penance died with the Apostles then so must have every other Sacrament."

"Yes, I am sure those who repudiate the Sacrament do not realize it but that is what their Biblical interpretation implies. Fortunately for those who might be confused by the two conflicting interpretations, however, there is abundant evidence *outside* of the Bible by which the validity of the Sacrament can be established—*tradition*. It is an historical fact that primitive Christianity accepted it as part of the Christian deposit of faith, an historical fact that for sixteen hundred years *all* of Christianity accepted it as part of the Christian deposit of faith and a fact visible to all the world today that four fifths of

Christianity—Catholic, Coptic, Greek Orthodox and Russian Orthodox—*still* accepts it as part of the Christian deposit of faith. Surely the testimony of tradition alone should remove any skepticism.”

Mark wore a puzzled expression. “It does seem rather strange that no one repudiated the Sacrament of Penance until comparatively recent times,” he reflected. “But you know why Protestantism objects to it: Protestant theologians maintain that priests are trespassing upon the special province of Christ when they presume to forgive sins, that the Sacrament of Penance is in direct conflict with that passage in the Bible which states that Christ is the *sole Mediator* between God and man. I must confess that has been my objection too. I find it extremely difficult to believe that a priest, a human being like you and me, can make decisions for God.”

“Yes, I am familiar with that argument,” Bob replied, “but Protestant theology fails to take two things into account: it fails to appreciate that the true Christian Church—as I explained earlier—in a very real sense *is* Christ. Colossians 1:18 makes that abundantly clear. It fails to grasp that the Church is not merely the living representative of Christ but the living *body* of Christ on earth, that when confessions are made to the Church they are not made to a strictly human body but to *the Body of Christ, the sole Mediator*.

“Secondly, Protestants fail to understand that priests themselves do not by any power of their own forgive sins—it is by the power of God that sins are forgiven—it is God who does the actual forgiving. The priest, God’s minister, merely serves as God’s audible voice in the matter; he counsels in the Name of God and pronounces the words, called Absolution, which lets it be known to the one who has confessed that his sins have been forgiven.”

Mark was not convinced. "But suppose the person making the confession is not *truly* sorry for his sins and has no intention of mending his ways; and suppose the priest, who, after all, is not a mind reader, fails to discern this and pronounces the words of Absolution; are that person's sins forgiven? Would the priest's voice *then* be the voice of God?"

Mark was laying it right on the line. This was the contingency that had always ruled out the reasonableness of auricular confession so far as he was concerned therefore he anxiously awaited Bob's answer. It would have to be good, he thought to himself, otherwise no amount of Scripture quoting and fancy deductions would sell him.

If Bob was disturbed by the question he did not show it. "In a case such as you mention, where there is not true sorrow and a genuine purpose of amendment, the Sacrament is rendered null and void and the one making the 'confession' is charged in conscience with a terrible new sin: the sin of *sacrilege*. Thus the words of Absolution have no affect other than to further incriminate the sinner. God will not be made a dupe. Catholics realize this, they realize the utter futility of a mock confession, so you can bet your bottom dollar that it seldom if ever happens.

"Sure, Catholics are apt to fall into sin after confession. Catholics are human with the same human weaknesses, the same free will, as other people. The Church does not claim that the Sacrament of Penance immunizes a person to sin. The purpose of the Sacrament simply is to *clean the soul* by gaining God's forgiveness for sins *previously committed*, thereby making room for an increase of God's grace which, in turn, gives a person a much greater *resistance* to future occasions of sin. And this, my friend, is not mere conjecture. It is a proven

fact that the best Catholics, those who sin the least, are the ones who receive the Sacrament of Penance most frequently.”

“Well I’ll be darned!” Mark exclaimed in amazement. “Here I have been entertaining the notion that priests were interfering where they had no business, that Catholics were not communicating with God in the confessional but with the priest, and it turns out that just the opposite is true. Believe me, from now on I am going to *investigate* before jumping to conclusions, and I mean investigate where I can have confidence in the accuracy of my information. No more hearsay evidence for me!”

Bob laughed sympathetically. “No need to feel embarrassed, Mark. I was taken in by the subtle arguments of the Church’s critics for many years too. And countless others, some of them highly educated people, have let themselves be taken in. People, it seems, are just too apt to forget that there are two sides to every argument.

“But to get on with the discussion: you wanted Papal Infallibility explained for you; you want to know why Catholics regard the Pope as legal head of the Christian Church, the supreme authority in matters relating to faith and morals.

“First let me straighten you out on what Papal Infallibility *really* means: It does not mean that the Pope personally is outside of the pall and consequences of sin. He must give an accounting of himself on the day of judgment the same as everyone else. Nor does it mean that he is *completely* immune to error of judgment. He is possessed of a finite intelligence the same as all humans. You may have heard that it means the Pope is absolutely above all reproach but that is not the case at all. He is usually a man of outstanding intelligence and piety—he is chosen for these qualities—and he is, therefore

highly esteemed by all the Church, but Papal infallibility has an altogether different connotation.

“What Papal Infallibility really means is: the Pope is protected from error by the Holy Spirit of God on those specific occasions when it becomes necessary for him, as supreme pastor of the Church, to define an article of faith about which there is some question, and when he declares whether or not that article of faith has been divinely revealed. Mind you, he does not formulate anything new; he merely eliminates all doubt concerning an *existing* Christian belief; then if the belief thus defined is deemed essential to Christian orthodoxy the Pope binds it upon all the faithful—he proclaims it a *dogma* of the Church.”

“In other words,” put in Mark, “the Pope acts as a sort of theological Supreme Court; he interprets God’s Laws for the Church in much the same manner our Supreme Court in Washington interprets the nation’s laws whenever a dispute arises.”

“In a manner of speaking, yes, but the Pope does not arrive at his decisions *wholly* independent of the rest of the Church. Before he makes an *ex cathedra* pronouncement, as it is called, he enters into lengthy consultation with the Church’s foremost theologians—sometimes these consultations last for years—and he polls the opinion of the world wide bishopric. But while these contacts exert a great influence on the Pope he is not bound by them—it is he who makes the final decision.”

Mark helped himself to another peppermint. “How do you *know* the Holy Spirit of God protects the Pope from error when he makes an *ex cathedra* pronouncement?” he inquired dubiously.

“Because Christ guaranteed it and because reason demands

it," Bob replied. "In John 15:26 Christ stated very emphatically that after His Ascension into heaven He would send to His Church 'another Advocate, the Spirit of Truth who proceeds from the Father' to guide and protect it all days. He repeated this promise again in John 16:7-15 lest there be any doubt. Being the supreme pastor of the Church and therefore chiefly responsible for the safekeeping of the Sacred Truths the Pope would naturally be singled out by the Holy Advocate for special protection.

"Reason demands it because the Church of God would not be the Church of God if it was subject to doctrinal error. God would not give us a Church for the purpose of teaching His truths, truths upon which the salvation of our souls depended, if that Church was liable to teach errors that would have the opposite effect of depriving us of our salvation. There would have to be some assurance, *some guarantee*, that in the vital matters of faith His Church would be absolutely infallible. If there was not this assurance we could not know with any degree of certainty whether in church we were hearing the Word of God or the word of Satan; we could not look with any degree of confidence to the Church for direction in the way of salvation—there would always be the feeling that the Church might possibly be wrong."

"Aren't you forgetting that we have the Bible?" countered Mark. "I would be inclined to believe that the Bible, not any human leader of Christianity, is the infallible teaching authority God gave us; that He sends the Holy Spirit of Truth not to any one group or individual but to *all* who read the Bible and strive to abide by its teachings."

Bob glanced affectionately at his friend. "No, Mark, I am not forgetting that Christianity has the Bible. But I am also

not forgetting that for four centuries there was no Christian Bible; that it was the Catholic Church, by direction of the Pope, which collected the writings of the Apostles and their disciples and decreed, at the Councils of Hippo and Carthage, which of them were divinely inspired and therefore worthy to be included in the Canon of New Testament Scripture; that it was the scribes of the Catholic monasteries, also by direction of the Pope, who produced all of the Bibles until the fifteenth century when the printing press was invented; that for sixteen hundred years, until the advent of Protestantism, all of Christianity accepted the Catholic Church's interpretation of the Bible. These, Mark, are facts which can be found in any authoritative, unabridged history of Christianity.

"Now I ask you, which authority has precedence over the other: the human authority of the Church which was constituted by Christ, or the Bible which was constituted by the human authority of the Church? If the Bible, according to the Protestant theory, is the supreme and only divinely authorized teacher of Christian truth, how did the Christians of the crucial first four centuries come by their faith? Did God whisper it in their ears? Or is it possible that Christ gave supreme authority to the human leaders of the Church for the first four centuries then *transferred* it over to the Bible? And if the Bible did become the only divinely authorized teacher of Christian truth from the fourth century on wasn't it rather derelict of God to hold up its availability to the masses by waiting until the fifteenth century to inspire someone to invent the printing press?"

"I must admit you have a point there," Mark said thoughtfully.

"I would say a very good point, especially when the opinion

of the Bible itself is taken into consideration: nowhere in the New Testament, to which we must look for Scripture evidence of Christ's teachings, are the faithful told that the Bible is the supreme and infallible Christian teaching authority. In fact the New Testament is not even mentioned in the New Testament. All references to the 'Scriptures' in the New Testament have to do with the Old Testament, which is understandable because the authors of the New Testament books were long dead before their writings were regarded as Sacred Scripture.

"On the other hand, observe that the New Testament, the Gospel of Christ, *does* say that the *Church* is the supreme arbiter of the faith, and says so most emphatically. In Matthew 18:17 Our Lord tells his followers in no uncertain terms that 'he who refuses to hear the Church let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican.' In 1 Timothy 3:15 the Apostle Paul states very categorically that 'the Church is the pillar and mainstay of truth.' And lest anyone get the mistaken idea that supreme teaching authority was not vested in the *human* leaders of the Church, Paul declared: 'Let everyone be subject to the higher authorities . . . those who exist have been appointed by God . . . he who resists the authority resists the ordinance of God and brings upon himself condemnation . . . for they are the ministers of God.' Romans 13:1-6. Again in 1 Thessalonians 5:12 Paul says the same thing.

"Secondly, there is the evidence of Protestantism itself. Ironically those who believe that the Bible and not the Church is the supreme and infallible teacher of Christian truth are, by their own example, the most eloquent witnesses to the falsity of such a belief. For, as you yourself have already admitted, there exists within Protestantism several hundred *conflicting* interpretations of divine truth—hardly the work of an *infallible*

libe teacher. If the Bible was the infallible teacher Protestantism says it is, if the Spirit of God really safeguards all those who read the Bible from error, there would not be even two conflicting interpretations, much less several hundred."

A strong resentment welled up inside Mark. That business about Protestantism being a testimony against itself was a bitter pill to swallow. But then what, Mark asked himself, could he say in rebuttal? There was no denying that Protestantism subscribed to a wide variation of Biblical interpretations, some of them as diametrically opposed to the others as darkness and light. There are the Baptists, for example, who believe that Baptism is *not* necessary for salvation while the Lutherans steadfastly maintain that it *is* necessary for salvation.

These deliberations within himself soon calmed Mark's resentment. "There is food for thought in what you say," he demurred. "I cannot bring myself to agree with you wholeheartedly right at the moment—one does not on the spur of the moment shake off the prejudice of a lifetime—but, in the face of the evidence you have presented, neither can I bring myself to disagree with you. I will have to mull over it some before forming a definite opinion.

"This much I will say, however," Mark continued, "contrary to what I have been led to believe, the doctrine of Papal Infallibility definitely is *not* based on presumption. You have made it clear that there is an abundance of supporting evidence for it in the Bible—and in logic too. Several of the implications contained in the doctrine may be a little difficult to grasp at first—none of us like the idea of bowing to a human authority, whether religious or secular—but it is easy to see

why the Catholic Church regards it as a *valid* Christian doctrine."

Bob felt that he should elaborate on Mark's statement: "The Catholic Church *ought* to know what is and what is not valid Christian doctrine, Mark," he said; "after all she has two thousand years of theological experience behind her. If experience means anything at all, and in every other walk of life it means everything, then we should have confidence in her judgment, the Presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church notwithstanding."

Mark could not suppress a hearty laugh. "Boy if you don't sound like a one man Chamber of Commerce for the Catholic Church . . ."

Bob, who appreciated a good pun, smiled broadly. "Well, you asked for it," he retorted, "you wanted to know what makes Catholics so sure of themselves and I am giving it to you straight. If I seem to go overboard at times it is only because I don't want to leave out any pertinent information."

"I understand," Mark said talking in a serious vein once more. "All kidding aside, Bob, I am grateful for the information. Already you have removed from my mind many false impressions of the Catholic Church so that I am beginning to comprehend why so many people want to become Catholics. Go on with your analysis—I promise not to poke any more fun."

Bob did not mind the fun. In his opinion a little joviality was a big help in assuaging sensitive feelings. But a glance at his watch told him that he had best proceed if he was to finish before they reached Uncle Nils' farm. They had time, he decided, for one more topic.

"Another aspect of the Catholic religion which contributes

much to its universal appeal, Mark, is the *incomparable beauty* of its worship. And I *don't* mean external beauty, although the externals of Catholic worship are indeed very beautiful. Anyone with an appreciation of aesthetics cannot help but be stirred by the color and artistry of the church appointments, the profoundly expressive liturgical music and the regality and solemnity of the ceremonies. In fact, so strikingly beautiful are the externals they attract many people to Catholic services who don't have the least idea of what is actually going on but who come simply because, as one non Catholic explained: 'it is a grand spectacle.'

"I have always regarded the fancy ornamentation and ritual of Catholic worship as a holdover from ancient Pagan worship," interjected Mark. "In other words, beautiful but unchristian."

Bob did not reply directly to Mark's comment but continued with his train of thought. "As beautiful as the externals are, however, they *do not* constitute the true and intrinsic beauty of Catholic worship; they are only the *accidents*, a reflection, so to speak, of a far greater beauty: the *spirit* of the worship. During the course of their worship Catholics are not conscious at all of the externals, the man made symbols, but have their hearts and minds centered on the heavenly things they symbolize: on God, His Majesty, His Love and His Mercy, on what they as His creatures and subjects owe Him in the way of love and adoration. The *spirituality* of Catholic worship, that is what is truly beautiful."

"But why such *expensive* 'accidents' as you call them?" demanded Mark. "Would not all that money be better spent on the poor? After all, religion pure and undefiled before God is

giving aid to the poor and suffering—that is what the Bible says.”

“A good question, Mark, but I would like to pose another question: Does one give a diamond to a loved one wrapped in burlap? or hold a reception for a king in a barn? Of course not if they are able to do better. Neither do Catholics consider it fitting that the precious gift of their worship should be offered to God in crude, mundane fashion, or that the King of Kings should be invited to a church which does not reflect in all its furnishings the love and devotion of His subjects. Catholics feel, and justifiably so, that if these things were missing their sincerity would not be up to God’s expectations.

“And let me ask another question: What Church gives more aid to the poor and suffering than the Catholic Church? It is a matter of record that the Catholic Church supports more orphanages, homes for the aged, hospitals, dispensaries, leprosariums and sends more food, clothing and medical supplies to disaster areas *than all other religious bodies combined*. Check with the International Red Cross and find out for yourself if this is not true.

“So you see, the Catholic Church is *not* putting on a show at the expense of the poor. This show, if you want to call it that, is put on for one purpose only: to give glory to God, and surely you would not consider that a waste. Did Our Lord consider it a waste when the penitent woman bathed His head with precious oils? No! He praised the woman very highly for honoring Him thus and rebuked the Apostles very sharply when they suggested that the oil should have been sold and the money given to the poor. Matthew 26:6-11.”

“It begins to make sense to me now,” Mark said. “I can see now that the beautiful embellishments involved in Catholic

worship is not extravagance but a sign of respect for God, a physical expression of a spiritual sentiment."

"That is correct. Catholics believe, and I am sure you will concur, that man is not a disembodied spirit, but a creature composed of both *body and spirit*; therefore if man is to worship God with his *whole* being there must be *both* a physical and a spiritual expression of worship."

Mark pondered for a moment, then said: "Yes, I must concur with that; it is only too obvious that man is composed of both body and spirit." Then something else occurred to him. "Come to think of it, Bob, the Jews of the Old Testament had a very elaborate ritual and embellished their temple with religious finery. One could hardly say their form of worship was contrary to God's Will."

"Since God prescribed the ritual and finery for the Jews, going over it point by point with Moses, their form of worship very definitely *was* His will; more than that, it was His *commandment*.

"Also of significance to Christians," continued Bob, "is the fact that Christ attended the Jewish services regularly before manifesting His Messiahship; and the fact that the Apostles, while they dispensed with the profane elements (animal offerings) of the Old Covenant worship, replacing them with the *Pure Oblation* of the New Covenant, continued to worship according to the outward form of the old Jewish ritual after Christ's death. The Apostles, as we note in the Bible, called the Christian version 'the breaking of bread' after the ceremony performed by Christ at the Last Supper.

"In fact all of Christianity worshipped in the ritualistic manner prescribed by God in the Old Testament until the advent of Protestantism and four fifths of Christianity *still*

worships in this manner. It has been made more beautiful, thanks to the Catholic Church, and the title, the Breaking of Bread, has long since been changed to *the Mass*, but the form and the essential elements inserted into the worship by Christ remain identically the same."

Mark had taken the thermos bottle from the glove compartment and was pouring the last of the coffee into two paper cups for Bob and himself. While he did this a question kept building up in his mind.

"What do you mean when you say the *essential elements* of traditional Christian worship has remained the same?" Bob asked. "What *are* the essential elements?"

Bob took a quick swallow of coffee. "Briefly, the essential elements are (1) that which is accomplished by the ritual and (2) the instruments that must be employed in order to accomplish it. Before you can fully understand what is meant by that, however, it will be necessary for you to know more about the *origin* of traditional Christian worship:

"Recall to your mind the Last Supper. This may come as a surprise to you, Mark, but the Last Supper was the first Mass. The Mass is a *repetition* in our own times of that great and momentuous Biblical event. At the Canon of the Mass the priest momentarily assumes the role of Christ, takes first bread and then wine into his hands, pronounces over them the words, 'this is my body . . . this is my blood,' just as Christ did, thereby changing the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ just as He did; then, still following the example of Christ, the priest offers up the Sacred Species to God the Father for the remission of the world's sins. It is an exact duplication of what took place at the Last Supper except that today's faithful are in attendance instead of the Apostles."

Mark wore an expression of sheer amazement. "Do you mean that all those motions and prayers in Latin at the altar is a duplication of the Last Supper? I went with a friend to Mass once long ago and thought it very beautiful but I'll be darned if I could see any resemblance to the Last Supper!"

Bob smiled understandingly. "Well, you would have seen the resemblance if you had paid close attention," he said. "If you had not allowed yourself to become distracted by the incidentals—the ringing of the chimes, the prayers of the congregation, et cetera—you would have seen the priest take a wafer of bread and a chalice of wine, solemnly make the Sign of the Cross over them, then lift them up toward heaven. It is really the most conspicuous gesture the priest makes at the altar, because, after all, it is the high point of the whole Mass Ritual."

"I must confess my eyes and mind wandered around quite a bit," reminisced Mark. "Next time, thanks to you, I will know what to look for. It should be very interesting."

Bob drank the last of his coffee then threw the empty container out of the car. "Interesting perhaps but unless you are conscious of one other thing you still will not be able to grasp the *full* Christian significance of the Mass. The Last Supper, you recall, was not just a farewell banquet, and Christ did not perform the miracle of changing bread and wine into His Body and Blood just to provide entertainment. The Last Supper was a *prefiguration* of the Offering He was soon to make of His Flesh and Blood on the Cross in order to secure the Salvation of mankind. Protestant as well as Catholic theologians understand that. Hence the Mass is not only a repetition of the Last Supper it is, in the truer sense, a reenactment, in an unbloody manner, of the great drama of *Calvary*.

"Think of it, Mark! The Epic of Epics occurring again and

again right on the altars of the Catholic Church! And no mimicry either, no mock Calvary, but the real thing with Christ, under the appearance of bread and wine, truly, *physically* present. Again and again in the Mass Christ, God Incarnate, pays a personal call on the faithful, letting them share in the Act that redeemed the world, giving Himself to them, Body, Soul and Divinity, in Holy Communion. It is really a tremendous, soul stirring thing, the magnitude and eternal implications of which mere words cannot even begin to express."

Mark thought it over, then said: "Yes, I can see the connection between the Mass and Christ's Sacrifice on Calvary, alright. That must be why it is sometimes called the Holy *Sacrifice* of the Mass. And I agree, it must be very edifying.

"But that part about Christ being actually, physically present," continued Mark, "I find that hard to believe. Tell me, Bob, how can you be sure, *absolutely sure*, the bread and wine is changed on the altar into the *actual* Flesh and Blood of Christ? Wouldn't it be more reasonable to regard Christ's presence in the bread and wine as a *symbolical* one, or more reasonable yet, as a *spiritual* one?" It was Mark the scientist speaking now.

Bob paused momentarily to arrange in his mind the evidence he was about to present to the dubious Mark, then said: "Catholics are as sure of the Real Presence of Christ in the consecrated bread and wine, Mark, as they are sure of the truth of Christianity itself. I will tell you why:

"First there is the testimony of the Sacred Scriptures: In John 6:52 Christ himself prophesied that He would give himself to the world under the appearance of bread, saying: 'The bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.'

Then lest anyone misinterpret His words to mean simply the Sacrifice of His Body on the Cross, or bread in which He would be present symbolically or spiritually, He added: 'Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you . . . for my flesh is food indeed and my blood is drink indeed.' John 6:54-56. Obviously there is no connection between giving himself on the Cross and giving himself as *eat* and *drink*; obviously one does not receive *life* from eating a symbol; and obviously one does not *eat* or *drink* a spiritual presence.

"That was the Real Presence prophesied. Now for the fulfillment of the prophecy—the miracle at the Last Supper: Observe that at the Last Supper Christ did not say of the bread and wine: 'this is a *symbol* of my body and blood.' In the plainest possible language He said of the bread and wine: 'This *is* my body . . . this *is* my blood.' And in the plainest possible language He said to the Apostles: 'Do this in commemoration of me.' Luke 22:19-20.

"How about the Apostles, did they believe that the bread and wine, duly consecrated, is changed into the Flesh and Blood of Christ? Very definitely. In 1 Corinthians 11:29 the Apostle Paul declared: 'He who eats the bread and drinks the wine unworthily, *without distinguishing the body of the Lord*, eats and drinks condemnation to himself.'

"And how about the Church Fathers, those venerable leaders of the Christian Church who succeeded the Apostles, did they believe in the miraculous change? Very definitely. Ignatius, disciple of the Apostle John, wrote in the second century concerning the heretics of the period: 'They have abstained from the Eucharist and prayer, because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the Flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ.' The

Eucharist, incidentally, is still the common designation for the consecrated bread and wine. Justin Martyr, another illustrious Church Father of the second century had this to say: 'This food is known among us as the Eucharist . . . We do not receive these things as common bread and common drink; but as Jesus Christ our Savior, being made flesh by the Word of God.' Similar statements by the leaders of the primitive Church could be multiplied almost without end.

"Finally, what is the opinion of the other Christian denominations which can trace their histories back a goodly number of centuries—the Coptic Church of Egypt and the Greek-Russian Orthodox? Observe that each one of them believe unqualifiedly in the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist of the Mass, and always have. Their Mass, except for a few liturgical differences, is identically the same as the Mass of the Catholic Church.

"Significantly, only Protestantism, a comparative late comer on the Christian scene, has seen fit to throw out the Mass and with it the Real Presence.

"So there you have it, Mark—either the Catholic Church is right in believing that Christ actually takes up His abode on her altars or the Bible is wrong and with it all of Christianity for sixteen hundred years. Think it over and let your conscience settle the question in your mind once and for all."

Mark's eyes had been closed, the better to concentrate on what Bob was saying. He opened them now and with the decisiveness of one who has swept aside the last vestige of doubt and suspicion said: "I'm convinced! The testimony of the Bible notwithstanding, I cannot bring myself to believe that God would allow all of Christianity to be wrong on such a vital precept of faith for so long a time."

After another moment of meditation Mark continued: "No wonder there is so much solemnity in the Mass! No wonder you Catholics flock to Mass come hell or high water! I would too if I realized that I would be meeting Jesus face to face. Sure we Protestants hear some wonderful and inspiring sermons in our churches, sing some beautiful hymns in praise of God and are led by the minister in some very moving prayers, and undoubtedly God appreciates our devotion; but there still is not that penetrating aura of holiness, *that intimate personal contact with Christ*, you speak of—there is not the realization among Protestants there is among Catholics that their form of worship was *prescribed by God*."

"Those were my sentiments when I first learned about the Mass too," Bob said.

There was a pause during which both reflected on what had been discussed, then Bob volunteered to break the silence.

"Well, I guess that just about covers it, Mark," he said. "There are other advantages to being a Catholic; for example, the Church's policy of aiding and abetting science—her universities are world renowned in that field of studies. Then there are the Church's progressive and humanitarian social policies—she is always in the front lines of the battle to preserve and further the rights of the so-called little man. But no need to elaborate on these. I think that by now you have a pretty fair idea where the Catholic Church derives her strength and vitality, why she commands so much loyalty from her members."

Mark brushed his hair back with his fingers and breathed a sigh of satisfaction. "Yes, it is quite a religion," he averred. "And I take my hat off to you, Bob—to think that you had the courage to set aside past prejudices in favor of a thorough,

objective study of the facts; then once you were convinced of the truth of Catholicism to have the courage to embrace it. It is not easy to switch religions, especially from Protestantism to Catholicism. So often it means losing friends, being practically disowned by your own family, having to quit old hang-outs. It would be a tough decision to make."

"Granted, it does take a certain amount of courage," agreed Bob, "but then so does going to the dentist, so does a lot of things we know must be done for our own good. The relief that results from it, though, is worth every bit of the pain suffered during the operation.

"But it really was not such a difficult move for me to make. I found that very few of my friends begrudged me my new found religious convictions. The great majority of my former friends are still my friends. Those few who did ridicule my action and choose to leave my company I considered poor friends to have anyway; because if there is anything I expect of a friend it is that he respect my conscience the same as I respect his. After all, a man's conscience is the *voice of his soul*, it is God speaking out of the soul telling us what we must or must not do under certain circumstances; so what right has some earthly bloke to interfere? If we let some would-be friend interfere and persuade us to go counter to the dictates of our conscience, what would God think?

"As for the members of my family, none of them much liked the idea of my becoming a Catholic. They were not bigoted against the Catholic Church but after hearing so many unsavory rumors they were terribly suspicious. But their disapproval did not last for long. After I explained *why* I did it, in much the same manner I have explained the advantages of Catholicism to you, they thought that maybe it wasn't such a

bad idea after all. In fact one of them has since followed me into the Church and I have reason to believe the others will in time, too."

Mark thought of his own family. They would undoubtedly take a dim view of him becoming a Catholic; but like Bob's family they would soon become reconciled to it; being intelligent people they would realize that he must live his own life.

Bob pointed to a prosperous looking farm some distance ahead and well off the highway. "That is Uncle Nils' place over there," he said. "It did not take as long to get here as I thought it would."

Mark appraised the farm then glanced down at his watch. They had taken *longer* to get there than Bob had predicted. That just goes to show you, he philosophized to himself, how relatively unimportant time can sometimes be.

Soon they were off the main highway and heading down a narrow dirt road toward the farm. They could see Aunt Julia waiting for them in the doorway.

"By the way, Bob," Mark said just before they pulled into the yard, "thanks a lot for the information on the Catholic Church. You cleared away a heap of misconception and apprehension. Don't be surprised if you see me in the Catholic Church someday too."

Bob threw his friend an affectionate glance. "I enjoyed our little religious tete a tete as much as you did, Mark," he replied. "And as for being surprised at your joining the Church, knowing how you like the better things of life I will be surprised if you don't."

They both laughed and soon were thinking about other things, like ice fishing and delicious fried chicken.

The End

...the first of the ...
...the second of the ...
...the third of the ...
...the fourth of the ...
...the fifth of the ...
...the sixth of the ...
...the seventh of the ...
...the eighth of the ...
...the ninth of the ...
...the tenth of the ...
...the eleventh of the ...
...the twelfth of the ...
...the thirteenth of the ...
...the fourteenth of the ...
...the fifteenth of the ...
...the sixteenth of the ...
...the seventeenth of the ...
...the eighteenth of the ...
...the nineteenth of the ...
...the twentieth of the ...
...the twenty-first of the ...
...the twenty-second of the ...
...the twenty-third of the ...
...the twenty-fourth of the ...
...the twenty-fifth of the ...
...the twenty-sixth of the ...
...the twenty-seventh of the ...
...the twenty-eighth of the ...
...the twenty-ninth of the ...
...the thirtieth of the ...
...the thirty-first of the ...
...the thirty-second of the ...
...the thirty-third of the ...
...the thirty-fourth of the ...
...the thirty-fifth of the ...
...the thirty-sixth of the ...
...the thirty-seventh of the ...
...the thirty-eighth of the ...
...the thirty-ninth of the ...
...the fortieth of the ...
...the forty-first of the ...
...the forty-second of the ...
...the forty-third of the ...
...the forty-fourth of the ...
...the forty-fifth of the ...
...the forty-sixth of the ...
...the forty-seventh of the ...
...the forty-eighth of the ...
...the forty-ninth of the ...
...the fiftieth of the ...
...the fifty-first of the ...
...the fifty-second of the ...
...the fifty-third of the ...
...the fifty-fourth of the ...
...the fifty-fifth of the ...
...the fifty-sixth of the ...
...the fifty-seventh of the ...
...the fifty-eighth of the ...
...the fifty-ninth of the ...
...the sixtieth of the ...
...the sixty-first of the ...
...the sixty-second of the ...
...the sixty-third of the ...
...the sixty-fourth of the ...
...the sixty-fifth of the ...
...the sixty-sixth of the ...
...the sixty-seventh of the ...
...the sixty-eighth of the ...
...the sixty-ninth of the ...
...the seventieth of the ...
...the seventy-first of the ...
...the seventy-second of the ...
...the seventy-third of the ...
...the seventy-fourth of the ...
...the seventy-fifth of the ...
...the seventy-sixth of the ...
...the seventy-seventh of the ...
...the seventy-eighth of the ...
...the seventy-ninth of the ...
...the eightieth of the ...
...the eighty-first of the ...
...the eighty-second of the ...
...the eighty-third of the ...
...the eighty-fourth of the ...
...the eighty-fifth of the ...
...the eighty-sixth of the ...
...the eighty-seventh of the ...
...the eighty-eighth of the ...
...the eighty-ninth of the ...
...the ninetieth of the ...
...the ninety-first of the ...
...the ninety-second of the ...
...the ninety-third of the ...
...the ninety-fourth of the ...
...the ninety-fifth of the ...
...the ninety-sixth of the ...
...the ninety-seventh of the ...
...the ninety-eighth of the ...
...the ninety-ninth of the ...
...the hundredth of the ...

For a more comprehensive study of Catholicism
the following books are recommended:

FATHER SMITH INSTRUCTS JACKSON—Noll. \$1.00

Our Sunday Visitor Press, Huntington, Indiana.

FAITH OF MILLIONS—O'Brien. \$1.25

Our Sunday Visitor Press, Huntington, Indiana.

I BELIEVE—Hurley. 50 cents

Paulist Press, 401 W. 59th St., New York 19, N. Y.

CATHOLICISM—CHRIST'S TRUE FAITH—Short. 35c

Bellarmino Publishing Co., Mound, Minn.

The books listed above may be purchased at any Catholic
book store or by ordering direct from the publisher.

For information on *how* to become a Catholic see a priest.
You will find him most friendly, understanding and help-
ful, and you will be under no obligation.

For a more comprehensive study of Catholicism
the following books are recommended:

FATHER SMITH INSTRUCTS JACKSON—Nell. \$1.00
Our Sunday Visitor Press, Huntington, Indiana.

FAITH OF MILLIONS—O'Brien. \$1.25
Our Sunday Visitor Press, Huntington, Indiana.

I BELIEVE—Haber, 50 cents
Fisher Press, 401 W. 59th St., New York 19, N. Y.

CATHOLICISM—CHRIST'S TRUE FAITH—Shon. \$2.
Bellamine Publishing Co., Mound, Minn.

The books listed above may be purchased at any Catholic
book store or by ordering direct from the publisher.

For information on how to become a Catholic see a priest.
You will find him most friendly, understanding and help-
ful, and you will be under no obligation.

HOW I CAME TO BE A CATHOLIC

BY PAUL WHITCOMB

I WAS BORN AND RAISED in an atmosphere of agnostic intellectualism. My father was a neuropathic physician and a disciple of Sigmund Freud and my mother a disciple of my father. My own favorite dish as a youth was Voltaire and Schopenhauer. So that by the time I had reached maturity I was quite thoroughly baptized in the pseudo religion of Humanism. I was a member of the *fashionable* modern set.

Always of a speculative turn of mind, however, with strong leanings toward the more challenging fields of dialectics, I eventually took up the study of metaphysics—again strictly out of academic curiosity. This study intrigued me, indeed captivated me, in a way no other had before. Here, I discovered, was the Science of Sciences, the root measure, insofar as man's mind was capable of measuring it, of the law of Creation. Not only did it stir my imagination but it snapped the sophistication right out of my conscience. The existence of God could be proved, *mathematically* proved. That thrilling thought kept turning over and over in my mind.

Toppled at last from the vainglorious perch of agnosticism I immediately set about making another intellectual ascent, this time up the great imposing structure of Christian theology. I procured a Bible and spent every free moment absorbed in its sacred contents. I had established the existence of God in my mind, now I must know something of the nature, the *personality*, of God. The Bible, I figured, would give me the clue.

Much of what I read in the Bible was vague—I was not,

after all, familiar with the customs and language idioms of the ancient Jews and Greeks—but I could grasp the central theme, to-wit: God, in addition to being Omnipotent and All Intelligent, is the Essence of love, justice and mercy; and Jesus Christ was God personified, come into the world not only to make vicarious atonement for the sin of Adam and Eve but to reassert His Sovereignty, to elaborate on His Laws and to illuminate with an even greater light the pathway to heavenly immortality; and the torchbearer of this light was to be His Church founded on the Apostles, endowed with His authority, imbued with His Holy Spirit and guaranteed divine protection all days until the final judgment.

Here, I concluded, was the divine plan of redemption, life's real purpose, brought into clear and beautiful focus, and by the Author of the plan, God himself—here was man's only real hope. Only one thing was missing from my conclusion to mar its lucidity: God's Church—where midst the vast galaxy of the world's churches was His true Church to be found? "Seek and ye shall find . . . knock and it will be opened unto you," Christ said. So I embarked upon the great search—I undertook an extensive study of comparative religions, concentrating naturally on the Christian religions—and after three years, and by the grace of God, I found the object of my search.

With painstaking impartiality I held every Christian denomination up to the light of Scripture, history and reason, checking and double checking lest I overlook some vital piece of evidence, and finished up with one name superimposed in great bold letters on my conscience—*Catholic*. On every ground I found the claims of the Catholic religion valid and altogether irresistible. I embraced it. It convinces my intellect,

solaces my heart, gratifies my conscience and fills my soul with a peace such as I had never before dreamed possible.

Now that I am in the Catholic Church I have a much clearer vision of its true image. I see in all its vitals the *image of Christ*. In the reception of its Sacraments I feel His comforting hand; in its pronouncements I hear His authoritative, cogent voice; in its manifold world wide charities I see His love and compassion; in the way it is harassed and vilified I see His agony and humility; in its worship I feel His Spirit girding my soul.

This compels my obedience. All else is shifting sand.

...and my heart ...
...I had never ...
...I was in the ...
...I was in the ...
...I was in the ...
...I was in the ...
...I was in the ...
...I was in the ...
...I was in the ...
...I was in the ...

...I was in the ...
...I was in the ...
...I was in the ...
...I was in the ...
...I was in the ...
...I was in the ...
...I was in the ...
...I was in the ...
...I was in the ...
...I was in the ...

...I was in the ...
...I was in the ...
...I was in the ...
...I was in the ...
...I was in the ...
...I was in the ...
...I was in the ...
...I was in the ...
...I was in the ...
...I was in the ...







