

KARL KEATING

Catholicism

AND

FUNDAMENTALISM



The Attack
ON “ROMANISM”

BY

“BIBLE CHRISTIANS”

IGNATIUS

Catholicism and Fundamentalism

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by “Bible Christians”

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Do not be afraid, speak out, and refuse to be silenced; I am with thee, and none shall come near to do thee harm; I have a great following in this city.

(Acts 18:9-10)

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Preface

Few orthodox Catholics can imagine themselves leaving their religion for another. If, in the disorientation that comes between sleep and wakefulness, they imagine changing their spiritual allegiance, they see themselves waving a fond farewell to Rome (“Well, it was almost what we were looking for”) and walking but a short distance to something Romelike.

They may see themselves turning to Eastern Orthodoxy, perceived as a haven from modern religious travails, or to Anglo-Catholicism, still a lure for the romantic and for readers of Pusey, Keble, and the early Newman. Or they may see themselves withdrawing from the active practice of religion, remaining “culturally Catholic,” honoring the faith of their upbringing in the breach and the perhaps twice-yearly observance (to placate spouse and children). To convert to mainline Protestantism, or to collapse into agnosticism, does not occur to them even in nightmares, and outright atheism is for crackpots and sour old men. They can contemplate only a slight shift—that, or a life of undistinguished lapsarianism.

What few practicing Catholics can imagine is that they might chuck Catholicism for something like fundamentalism, to which they are not drawn at all. Still, they know that people of their acquaintance, people from their own parishes, have made the transition, and are seemingly none the worse for wear. These former Catholics function the same way on the job, cavort with their children at the same parks, and shop at the same malls. They seem largely unchanged by their newfound faith.

Despite that, their conversion is taken as a betrayal because it is a denial. A change to Eastern Orthodoxy or Anglo-Catholicism is more an adjustment than a real switch; even becoming a lapsed Catholic makes sense, since it is a matter of letting spiritual indolence take control. But fundamentalism? To embrace it is to reject Catholicism outright, because fundamentalism does not just modify, but discards, the sacramental and liturgical core of Catholicism. One might as well subscribe to an obscure Eastern cult. To most Catholics, that would be just as sensible.

This lack of sympathy with the bare possibility of conversion to

fundamentalism may be one reason the fundamentalist problem is misunderstood by Catholics. After all, it is hard to understand something that is not taken seriously. But the allure of fundamentalism *should* be taken seriously, if for no other reason than that hundreds of thousands of Catholics have taken it so seriously in the last few years that they have joined “Bible-believing” churches. Many of them have become not just non-Catholics, but anti-Catholics, because such an attitude is the natural result of the logic of their position. They perceive a duty to bring into “real Christianity” the family and friends they left at Mass, and bring them in they have. In this they have not been left to their own devices. Hundreds of organizations and thousands of individuals work to introduce Catholics to fundamentalism, and each year they distribute millions of books, tracts, and recordings. They have been remarkably successful, and their techniques and arguments are worth examining.

First, though, a few words about what not to expect. What follows will be no thorough review of fundamentalism as a whole and still less of Protestantism. The focus is on that part of fundamentalism actively engaged in anti-Catholic work and on the issues brought up in that work. Just as fundamentalists form a subset of all Protestants, so actively anti-Catholic fundamentalists are a subset of all fundamentalists. It is the tireless workers in the anti-Catholic fields who are profiled here, and even then there is room to consider only representatives of the movement and only some of their charges.

Do not expect this book to discuss what it is not meant to discuss. (There is little more frustrating for a writer than to be accused of badly handling a topic he had no intention of discussing anyway.) The focus is on those fundamentalists, whether blessed with notoriety or with anonymity, who try to convince Catholics to forsake Rome and on the arguments they make against Catholicism. Many of the best-known fundamentalists do not fall within this purview because they act irenically, making common cause with Catholics on social and political matters and never using terms such as “papist”, or “Romish”, or “Jesuitical”—terms that are giveaways for active anti-Catholics.

Keep in mind that when we try to locate fundamentalism on the religious spectrum, we run into all sorts of terminological confusions. What popularly goes by the name may be considered one wing of evangelicalism. In fact, the theology attributed to fundamentalists in this book can be attributed to many

self-described evangelicals who are put off by fundamentalism's reaction to the Catholic Church. It is easy to find people who call themselves evangelicals, who disdain fundamentalists, who are reasonably friendly with Catholics (even allowing us the title Christian), yet whose theological beliefs are indistinguishable from those of strict fundamentalists. Millions who shun the label are theologically fundamentalists.

For convenience—or out of discomfort in being bracketed with people who get a bad press—they choose a looser label. And loose it is. Evangelicalism is a spectrum. At one end it merges, even coincides, with strict fundamentalism; at the other it fades into mainline Protestantism, which is to say, religious liberalism. It is a matter of convenience that the term fundamentalist is used in these pages. There appears to be no adequate alternative. “Evangelical” is too broad; “conservative evangelical” is too awkward; “Bible Christian” implies that no other Christians base their faith on the Bible.

In covering anti-Catholic activity among fundamentalists, a writer cannot please everyone, Catholic or fundamentalist. Sometimes he cannot please anyone. Each reader will lament that something was left out, something was given too much attention, or something was given the wrong emphasis. “Why did he skip *the* one important point?” people will ask. “Why is *this* group omitted?”

The United States boasts (if that is the proper word) hundreds of anti-Catholic organizations. Only a few can be profiled here. Little-known organizations headed by little-known anti-Catholics have been given as much space as their well-known counterparts because most anti-Catholic groups are small, though their cumulative effect is large. Even then, it is not so much the groups that are examined as their arguments. The selection of arguments has not been entirely arbitrary, although it may appear so to the reader unable to find a consideration of the one that most interests him. Opponents of “Romanism” throw countless accusations against the Church. There is hardly space to list them all, let alone space to refute them. Far better, surely, to look at a sampling, stating the anti-Catholics' positions, so far as possible, in their own words and leaving room for what are intended to be adequate, although not complete, Catholic rejoinders.

The first part of this book deals with “professional anti-Catholics”, fundamentalists who earn their livelihoods by attacking the “Whore of Babylon”. In the second part representative issues are dissected. The final chapters give advice in practical apologetics (what to do, what not to do) and

in the intellectual preparation necessary for fruitful apologetics work.

Chapter 1

Background to Controversy

The story of fundamentalism may be viewed in three main phases.¹ The first lasted a generation, from the 1890s to the Scopes Trial of 1925. Fundamentalism emerged as a reaction to liberalizing trends in American Protestantism. Under a separatist impulse and influenced by millennialism and dispensationalism,² it broke off, but never completely, from evangelicalism, of which it may be considered one wing. In its second phase, after what many considered a crushing defeat at Dayton, Tennessee, it passed from view but never disappeared and never even lost ground. Finally, fundamentalism came to the nation's attention again a generation ago, and it has enjoyed remarkable growth since.

Not counting quasi-Christian sects such as the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, fundamentalism has experienced the greatest growth, in percentage terms, of any type of Christianity. Converts have included the previously unchurched and dropouts from other denominations. What has been surprising is that Catholics comprise a disproportionate share of the new recruits. The Catholic Church in America claims about a quarter of the country's inhabitants, so one might expect about a quarter of the converts to fundamentalism to have been Catholics at one time. Indeed, a reasonable expectation might be for an even smaller share, since people already in a church tend to remain through inertia, while the unchurched have fewer ties to keep them from conversion. Yet in many fundamentalist congregations a third, a half, or even a majority of the members once gave allegiance to Rome.³ This varies around the country, of course.

Fundamentalist churches in the South claim few converts from Catholicism because there never have been many Catholics there anyway. In parts of the Northeast and Midwest, where Catholics are more numerous, one finds former Catholics making up a majority of some fundamentalist congregations. In the Southwest, with a high Hispanic population, whole congregations consist of former Catholics. As many as one out of six

Hispanics in this country is now a fundamentalist. So great and so rapid has the exodus been that only twenty years ago one could find almost no Hispanic fundamentalists.

Although present-day fundamentalism is mainly American⁴ and is, as a movement within or alongside evangelicalism, rather new, many of its leaders speak as though it has been a well-formed, if often hidden, whole since the days of Christ. At the least, many people, both inside and outside fundamentalism, think it is unalloyed Reformation religion. This impression is bolstered by professional anti-Catholics, who speak and write like the Reformers they admire. They have steeped themselves in Calvin's *Institutes* or Luther's *Works*, and they use the diction of the sixteenth century. Writings of their opponents are called "epistles of straw" (Luther's label for the Epistle of James). They throw around the term "Antichrist" with abandon, as though it were a talisman. Whatever they dislike is "blasphemous", even if the matter at hand has nothing to do with blasphemy. And the histrionics of their pulpit orations give unhappy credence to stereotypes. (Yes, some fundamentalist preachers really do thump Bibles.)

Despite such appearances, fundamentalism's connection to the Reformation is not as clear as nonfundamentalists might think or as fundamentalists might hope. The direct historical link is not only obscure, but nearly absent. In recent years fundamentalism has received a considerable press, and people realize it is resurgent, but many also think it has been around for centuries and has only recently achieved notoriety. Not so.

True, there long have been people who have been, say, strict Calvinists, and fundamentalism is nothing if not Calvinistic. Yet until a lifetime ago fundamentalism as we know it was not a separate movement within Protestantism, and the word itself was unknown. People who today would be called fundamentalists were then just Baptists or Presbyterians or whatever; they did not perceive themselves as belonging to a religious faction within Protestantism, a faction that transcended denominational lines. In the last decade of the nineteenth century there arose issues that made them start to withdraw from mainline Protestantism, so that today, while their descendants may still be Baptists or Presbyterians or whatever, they are first fundamentalists, even if they shy away from that term and adopt one that has not been so abused by the secular media.

The issues that first divided fundamentalism from the remainder of Protestantism were the Social Gospel, a liberalizing and secularizing trend

within Protestantism; the embrace of Darwinism, which seemed to call into question the reliability of Scripture; and the higher criticism of the Bible that came out of Germany. New thinkers attempted to synthesize secularism and Christianity and did so by giving up Christianity, or so the conservatives thought. In reaction to these trends early fundamentalist leaders united around several basic principles, but it was not until the publication of the series of twelve volumes called *The Fundamentals*⁵ that the movement received its name.

The basic elements of fundamentalism were formulated almost exactly a century ago at the Princeton Theological Seminary in Princeton, New Jersey, by Benjamin B. Warfield, Charles Hodge, and their associates.⁶ What they produced became known as Princeton theology, and it appealed to conservative Protestants who were concerned with the Social Gospel movement.

Between 1909 and 1915 the brothers Milton and Lyman Stewart, whose wealth came from oil, underwrote *The Fundamentals*, a series of twelve paperback books. The preface to the volumes explained their purpose: “In 1909 God moved two Christian laymen to set aside a large sum of money [\$300,000] for issuing twelve volumes that would set forth the fundamentals of the Christian faith, and which were to be sent free to ministers of the gospel, missionaries, Sunday school superintendents, and others engaged in aggressive Christian work throughout the English-speaking world.” Three million copies were distributed. Each volume contained seven or eight essays. Aside from studies of strictly doctrinal matters, there were attacks on modern biblical criticism, critiques of scientific theories, personal testimonies, commentaries on missionary work and evangelization, and accounts of heresies. The last category included essays on “Catholicism: Is It Christian?” and “Rome, the Antagonist of the Nation”.⁷

There were sixty-four contributors, including scholars such as C. I. Scofield, compiler of the *Scofield Reference Bible*; “W. J. Eerdman and his son, Charles; H. C. G. Motile, Anglican bishop of Durham; James M. Gray, dean of the Moody Bible Institute; and Warfield himself. They included Presbyterian ministers, Methodist evangelists, editors of religious periodicals, professors, even an Egyptologist.⁸ As Edward Dobson, an associate pastor at Jerry Falwell’s Thomas Road Baptist Church, put it, “They were certainly not anti-intellectual, snakehandling, cultic, obscurantist fanatics.”⁹

The fundamentals identified in the series have been tallied variously, some

listing as many as fourteen points. Most commentators agree on at least these five: (1) the inspiration and infallibility of Scripture; (2) the deity of Christ, including his Virgin Birth; (3) the substitutionary atonement of his death; (4) his literal resurrection from the dead; and (5) his literal return in the Second Coming. Dobson writes, “Although some have expanded this list to include such issues as a literal heaven and hell, soulwinning, a personal Satan, and the local church, nevertheless the doctrinal character of fundamentalism still centers around the five fundamentals listed.”¹⁰

The books were noticed by many who were unsympathetic to the views expressed in them. On May 22, 1922, Harry Emerson Fosdick, himself a theological liberal, preached on the subject “Shall the Fundamentalists Win?” He used the title of the books to designate the people he was opposing, and the label stuck. He was not, though, the coiner of the word. That honor goes to Curtis Lee Law, who, in an editorial for the *New York Watchman-Examiner* of July 1, 1920, defined “fundamentalists” as those “who mean to do battle for the fundamentals”.¹¹

This at least explains how the name of the movement came into being. The movement itself has a more confused origin. It had no one founder, nor was there a single event that precipitated its advent. Fundamentalist writers—especially those who write against the Catholic Church—insist that fundamentalism is nothing but a continuation of Christian orthodoxy, which prevailed for three centuries after Christ, went underground for twelve hundred years, surfaced with the Reformation, took its knocks from various sources, and was alternately influential and diminished in visibility. According to its partisans, fundamentalism is what remains after the rest of Christianity, if it can be granted the title, has fallen into apostasy.

The real history of fundamentalism is more prosaic. It is mainly an American phenomenon influenced by British evangelicalism, and it would be difficult to trace its antecedents beyond the Great Awakening of the 1720s, by the end of which, two decades later, perhaps a third of the adults in the Colonies had undergone a religious conversion. The Great Awakening might be credited with making the larger number of Americans consciously religious, and a widely spread religious sense meant a fertile ground for what would come to be called fundamentalism.

Most commentators look to the nineteenth century for fundamentalism’s origin. That century saw the steady dividing of American Protestantism, as first one disaffected group split from its denomination, then another. For

example, the Methodist revival of 1866, held on the centenary of the establishment of Methodism in America, culminated in the Holiness Camp Meeting of Vineland, New Jersey, a year later, and *that* culminated in schism, with the Holiness Churches splitting off from Methodism, which itself had split off from Anglicanism.

It was the nineteenth century that saw the rise of millennialism and dispensationalism, closely allied beliefs. The former refers to the literal thousand-year reign of Christ on earth (see Rev 20) and is usually accompanied by a propensity for interpreting scriptural prophecies as referring to present or imminent historical events—in recent years, the Cold War and the status of Israel. The varieties of millennialism are numerous, there being no party line on the matter among fundamentalists. There is little agreement about when the Second Coming will occur—will it be before or after the millennium?—and less agreement on how to understand what many acknowledge to be predictions about the immediate future. A century ago, millennialism was chiefly known for the frequency with which its proponents gave precise, but unfailingly wrong, dates for the end of the world. Millennialists are more circumspect today.

Dispensationalism was a theory developed by John Nelson Darby (1800—1882), founder of the Plymouth Brethren. Darby divided history into dispensations, or eras, in which God dwells in different ways with different people. Dispensationalists distinguished between Israel and the Church—one God’s earthly people, the other his heavenly people. The distinctive phrase of their movement was “dividing the word of truth”. This referred to deciding which parts of the Bible refer to Israel and which to the Church.

The present era was considered the “time of the Gentiles”, in which Israel suffers as it awaits the fulfillment of biblical prophecies. These prophecies are to be fulfilled beginning at the Rapture, when the “saints” will be taken alive to heaven. The Rapture immediately precedes the Tribulation, which cleanses the world in anticipation of Christ’s reign. Darby’s writings influenced C. I. Scofield, and today many fundamentalists receive their instruction in dispensationalism from *The Scofield Reference Bible*.

Neither millennialism nor dispensationalism figures much in disputes between Catholics and fundamentalists, although many of the latter, along with many evangelicals, are preoccupied with such notions, as evidenced by the popularity of books such as Hal Lindsey’s *Late Great Planet Earth*. Complaints about Catholicism seldom refer to peculiarly fundamentalist or

evangelical doctrines; the focus is almost always on peculiarly Catholic doctrines. For their part, Catholics take little interest in millennialism, although it intrigued their ancestors at the turn of the eleventh century, and even less in dispensationalism, which has never intrigued any of them.

Fundamentalists regard the Bible as the keystone of their faith. Their understanding of inspiration and inerrancy comes from Benjamin Warfield's notion of plenary-verbal inspiration, meaning that in the autographs all of the Bible is inspired and the inspiration extends not just to the message God wished to convey, but to the very words chosen by the sacred writers. For many fundamentalists, particularly those not of an intellectual bent, this reduces to the dictation theory of inspiration—the human authors were mere stenographers, their only task being to record what the Voice said. This, of course, implies not only a Bible free from error, which is also the orthodox Catholic position, but also a Bible free from ambiguity and, often, symbolism, one in which the words are taken in *the* plainest sense, which often means the sense they would have if taken out of context. (An exception is John 6, where the Eucharist is promised. This chapter is never taken literally by fundamentalists, but is by Catholics.)

The key problem with fundamentalists' understanding of the Bible is that they have no rational grounds for what they believe. That sounds harsh, but it is true, and fundamentalists admit it. As E. J. Young says, "If the Bible is not a trustworthy witness of its own character, we have no assurance that our Christian faith is founded upon Truth." He argues that refusing to make the Bible alone normative is to embrace "results which are hostile to supernatural Christianity".¹² The Bible must be accepted as the sole rule of faith because any other position leads to the abandonment of Christianity, and that, as Churchill might say, *is something* up with which we will not put. We believe the Bible to be true, say fundamentalists, because to adopt any other position is to deny the truths in which we otherwise believe. It is not hard to see that this position has seldom appealed to the intellectually demanding, since the implication is that it would be salutary to accept even a wrong understanding of the Bible so long as basic Christian truths, whatever one thinks they might be, are protected.

Although the doctrines of the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible come first to the tongue of most fundamentalists, the logically prior doctrine is the deity of Christ. For the Catholic, his deity is accepted either on the word of the authoritative and infallible Church or because a dispassionate

examination of the Bible and early Christian history shows that he must have been just what he claimed to be, God. Most Catholics, as a practical matter, use the first method; many—the apologist Arnold Lunn¹³ was a good example—use the second while not denying the first. In either case, there is a certain reasoning involved. For the fundamentalist the assurance of Christ's divinity comes not through reason, or even through faith in the Catholic meaning of the word, but in a different way.

As Warfield put it, “The supreme proof to every Christian of the deity of his Lord is in his own inner experience of the transforming power of his Lord upon the heart and life.”¹⁴ One consequence of this has become painfully clear to many fundamentalists. When one falls into sin, or when the ardor that was present at conversion fades, the transforming power of Christ seems to go, and so might one's belief in his deity. It is one thing to say that belief should so manifest itself in Christians that people will say, “See how they love one another.” It is something else to posit the truth of Christ's divinity on the constancy of human holiness and spiritual consolations. This accounts for many defections from fundamentalism. The dark night of the soul, which visits many, results in jettisoning the fundamentalist position, and often what is embraced is not another brand of Christianity, but a vague agnosticism.

As an appendage to the doctrine of the deity of Christ, and considered equally important in *The Fundamentals*, is the Virgin Birth. (Some fundamentalists list this separately, making six basic doctrines instead of five.) One might expect the reality of heaven and hell or the existence of the Trinity to be next, but the Virgin Birth is taken as a vital belief, since it protects belief in Christ's deity. One should keep in mind, though, that when fundamentalists speak of Christ's birth from a virgin, they mean a virgin only until his birth. Their common understanding is that Mary had later children, all those disciples referred to as Christ's “brethren”.

In reaction to the Social Gospel advocates, who said Christ gave nothing more than a good moral example, the early fundamentalists insisted on their third point, that he died a substitutionary death. He not only took on our sins; he received the penalty that would have been ours. He was actually *punished* by the Father in our stead.

On the matter of the Resurrection fundamentalists do not differ from orthodox Catholics. Christ rose physically from the dead, not just symbolically. His Resurrection was not a collective hallucination of his followers or something invented by pious writers of later years. It really

happened, and to deny its actuality is to deny Scripture's reliability.

The most disputed topic, among fundamentalists themselves, is the Second Coming. If there is agreement, it is only on the point that Christ will physically return to Earth. When that will be is up for grabs. Premillennialists say it will be before the millennium, the thousand-year reign. Postmillennialists say it will be after. There is little consensus on just what the millennium itself will be. There are also disputes about the Rapture and the Tribulation. With respect to the latter, there is widespread disagreement on its nature and its timing with respect to the millennium. Some think it is around the corner, with the Russians playing the role assigned to the northern power in Daniel.¹⁵ Others say it is in the distant future. If Catholics may be called partial to St. Malachy's prophecies about the Popes and to the three secrets of Fatima, fundamentalists may be termed absorbed in chronicling the Last Days, the only difficulty being that no two major commentators agree on what will happen or when.

Such are the five or six main points discussed in the books that gave fundamentalism its name. They are not necessarily the points that most distinguish fundamentalism today. One rarely hears much discussion about the Virgin Birth, for instance. Of course, there is no question about fundamentalists believing that doctrine (but not the perpetual virginity of Mary), but to the general public, and to most fundamentalists themselves, fundamentalism has today a somewhat different emphasis.

First to catch one's eye is the fundamentalists' reliance on the Bible to the complete exclusion of any authority wielded by the Church. The second is their insistence in a faith in Christ as personal Lord and Savior. "Do you accept Christ as your personal Lord and Savior?" they ask. "Have you been saved?" This is unalloyed Christian individualism. The individual is saved without real regard to a church, the congregation, or anyone else. It is a one-to-one relationship, with no mediators, no sacraments, just the individual Christian and his Lord. The Christian *knows* when he has been saved, down to the hour and minute of his salvation, because his salvation came when he "accepted" Christ. It came like a flash, never to be forgotten, the way it came to Paul on the Damascus Road.

In that instant, the fundamentalist's salvation was assured. There is now nothing that can undo it. Without that instant, he would be doomed. That is why the third most visible thing about fundamentalists is their evangelism. If sinners do not undergo the same kind of salvation experience fundamentalists

have undergone, they will go to hell. Fundamentalists perceive a duty to spread their faith—what can be more charitable than to give others a chance for escaping hell?—and in that they have been successful.

Their success is partly due to their discipline. For all their talk about the Catholic Church being “rule-laden”, there are perhaps no Christians who operate today in a more regimented manner. Their rules—mainly nonbiblical, one might add—extend not just to religion and religious practices proper but to facets of everyday life. (Strictures on drinking, gambling, dancing, and smoking come to mind.)¹⁶ What is more, fundamentalists are intensely involved in their local congregations.

Many people returning to the Catholic Church from fundamentalism complain that as fundamentalists they had no time or room for themselves; everything centered around the church. All their friends were members; all their social activities were staged by it. Not to attend Wednesday evening services in addition to one or two services *on* Sunday, not to participate in Bible studies and youth groups, not to dress and act like everyone else in the congregation—these immediately put one beyond the pale, and in a small church (few fundamentalist churches have more than a hundred members) this meant ostracism, a silent invitation to worship elsewhere.

Many of the influences that have given rise to fundamentalism, including the fissiparousness of nineteenth-century Protestantism, have been signs of underlying puritanism—not, of course, the puritanism of the seventeenth-century Puritans, but the attitude that is at the core of every offshoot from traditional Christianity, the desire to return to the purity of the early Church. This kind of puritanism remains the motivating force of fundamentalism, as demonstrated by one of the key charges against the Catholic Church, that it has obscured the original purity of Christianity with centuries of unscriptural encrustations. For the fundamentalist, one of the first duties is to grasp the essence, the pith, of Christianity as it left the mouth of its Founder—and then to admit no “inventions”.

Many Catholics who have written about fundamentalism misunderstand it. They psychologize it into a mass of emotional contradictions. They accept the view of the popular press that fundamentalism is not a matter of theology but of pathology. A man subscribes to the fundamentalist position, it is said, because he is ashamed of being poor, or because he is ill educated, or because the priest or minister at his previous church mistreated him and he is out for revenge or for consoling pats on the back. He does not accept

fundamentalism the way an enlightened liberal accepts liberalism, with consideration and forethought. Some critics come perilously close to concluding that any fundamentalist is a loon. Granted, some are—but so are some Catholics and more than a few secularists.

Peggy L. Shriver, assistant general secretary of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States, says that “because an insecure ego can be supported by the scaffolding of a fundamentalist faith, it is not surprising that many people who are ‘marginal’ to society are drawn to fundamentalism. Various studies have shown that there are fewer wealthy and well-educated people who count themselves fundamentalists and a greater number of low-income and less educated people than the population at large.”¹⁷ This gentle put-down is imprudently echoed by Catholic writers, who might be surprised to learn that fundamentalists, such as Loraine Boettner in his *Roman Catholicism*, make the same charge against the Catholic religion, saying Catholic societies are backward compared to Protestant—after all, just look at Spain and Ireland, then at England and the United States. The Catholic Church finds its numbers among the poorer classes, they say, a sign that Catholicism is not blessed by God, since divine election manifests itself through material prosperity.¹⁸

Whatever forces might have steered a man to fundamentalism in the first place—and it must be granted that emotional factors play a part, as they do in most conversions, no matter the direction—he remains a fundamentalist for doctrinal reasons. He might have left his previous church out of anger or frustration, and he might have been attracted to the fundamentalist congregation down the road because the pastor is a fine preacher or because the church members befriended him.

These emotional pushes and pulls are short-lived, and in most cases they merely help the convert do what he wanted to do anyway. He could have found ministers as eloquent or congregants as kind in one of the mainline Protestant churches or even in some eccentric cult, but, as important as those factors might be, they were not the reason he converted. His conversion had to do with doctrines. The doctrines to which he adheres are not ones he discovered for himself, furtively reading the Bible late at night while his wife and children slept. The doctrines he was taught first, and the Bible has been used to justify them.

Fundamentalists use the Bible to protect beliefs that are, in fact, antecedent to the Bible, which is interpreted so it justifies what they already hold,

although most fundamentalists think what they believe comes straight out of the sacred text and that they are merely acknowledging its plain meaning. This confusion on their part is matched by one on the part of most nonfundamentalists, who think fundamentalists interpret Scripture in a strictly literal manner. This is incorrect. Fundamentalists do not take each word of the Bible in its surface sense, although it is commonly thought they do. To justify some of their doctrines, fundamentalists must discover in a metaphor a new “literal” interpretation of Scripture, and they not uncommonly find themselves arguing that what is really the plain, surface meaning is nothing but dangerous symbolism. They do not hesitate to read between the lines if such reading is needed to preserve their position—a position that precedes their scriptural interpretation.

In an analogous fashion, fundamentalists engaged in anti-Catholic work will interpret not just the Bible, but Christian history and Catholic creedal and apologetic works, in whatever way is required for them to prove their main point, that the Catholic religion bears only superficial resemblance to the religion founded by Christ, that it is mainly a religion of men, not of God. Their technique can be demonstrated by scrutinizing representative anti-Catholic publications, groups, and individuals.

Chapter 2

The Anti-Catholic's Sourcebook

We all like a good argument. We like the give-and-take, and we enjoy watching one party score a point and the second return the favor. A good argument, particularly on an important theme, stimulates our minds and helps us draw our own conclusions. We do not demand that each participant give both sides—each needs to give only his own, as well as he can—but we do insist on fair play. We do not want one participant to misrepresent what the other thinks or to make points by using cheap shots. Ridicule, misrepresentation, taking quotations out of context, bending the truth, leaving out important facts—these violate the rules of the game. We feel cheated if one side tries to gain an unfair advantage. If all this is true when the participants meet face to face before an audience, it is even truer when the argument is conducted in writing, when all we have is one side's version tucked between the covers of a book. Nowhere, perhaps, are these rules of fair play violated with greater regularity than in the writings of fundamentalists who attack the Catholic religion.

It is no secret that in recent years fundamentalist churches have been gaining members at a surprising rate. Many of the new recruits are former Catholics. In fact, in many fundamentalist churches, more than half the members converted from Catholicism. The reasons for the conversions are many, but most converts have been influenced by arguments attacking “Romanism”. Some fundamentalists who seek out Catholics as converts are not merely profundamentalist; they are also decidedly anti-Catholic. They expend more effort on abusing the Catholic religion than on justifying their own. They are more interested in showing Catholicism is wrong, no matter what it takes to “prove” that, than they are in showing their position is right.

Just a few years ago people were saying anti-Catholicism was going the way of the dinosaur. If so, it seems the dinosaur has made an unexpected comeback, because anti-Catholicism is healthier now than it has been for years. New organizations dedicated to undermining the Church keep

cropping up, and old ones are revived, and together they turn out more tracts, magazines, and books than ever before—millions of copies each year.

After reading enough of this material one becomes aware that the same points tend to be made in the same way, even in the same words. Who is borrowing from whom? It does not seem that any of these groups relies heavily on any other. Instead, they all seem to fall back on one source, Loraine Boettner's *Roman Catholicism*, which might be called the "Bible" of the anti-Catholic movement within fundamentalism. It is in this book that the anti-Catholic position is most extensively expressed. *Roman Catholicism* is worth examining, because what credibility the anti-Catholic movement has depends largely on the credibility of this one volume.

First, a few words about the author. Loraine Boettner has to his name a dozen books, several of them still in print. His first, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, was published in 1932. Other titles include *The Christian Attitude toward War*, *The Atonement*, and *Immortality*. In 1962 Boettner saw through the presses the book for which he is best known, *Roman Catholicism*. It was published by the Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company and has been reprinted numerous times. Well over a hundred thousand copies of *Roman Catholicism* have been sold, most of them in the last few years. After a career of teaching at Protestant schools of divinity, Boettner retired to Rock Port, Missouri, from which he still issues occasional salvos against Catholics, but for the most part he is retired from the fray and gives encouragement to younger people who have taken up his fight.

When *Roman Catholicism* was first published, the book and its author gained instant notoriety. Today there are many persons, organizations, and publications that are better known as promoters of anti-Catholicism, but none is more influential. Few people realize that most professional anti-Catholics are deeply indebted to Loraine Boettner's work. Pick up an anti-Catholic tract, then turn to the same subject in *Roman Catholicism*. As likely as not, the words will be the same, simple plagiarism. In the world of religious bigotry, it seems all roads lead to *Roman Catholicism*. That is not surprising, since this fat book is full of juicy tidbits. Its 466 pages are packed with countless accusations against Catholics and their religion. It was meant to be the definitive anti-Catholic work, something that would give intellectual substance to an attitude unwelcome in most circles.

Roman Catholicism operates at two levels. On the first and more important, it is an attack on the Catholic religion, its charges ranging across

doctrines, ecclesiastical and secular history, and Catholic customs. On the other level the book is a defense of Boettner's own beliefs. As he puts it, "The primary purpose of this work is to set forth in strong contrast the differences between the evangelical Protestant and the Roman Catholic churches, both in regard to doctrine and in regard to practical effects where these two systems have been effective in the lives of the people."¹ Nowadays the term fundamentalist would more commonly be used for the position Boettner espouses, and it is, indeed, mainly fundamentalists who use his text as their source of ammunition against the Catholic Church.

There is no room here to discuss each point Boettner brings up—the refutation of a one-sentence charge may take *a* page, and his tome would require a small library as an adequate reply—but the style of *Roman Catholicism* can be conveyed, and the reader can see there are serious deficiencies in the book, which forms the basis of the anti-Catholic movement.

The main problem with Boettner's *magnum opus* is that it suffers from a real lack of intellectual rigor. For example, he shows virtually no familiarity with the writings of the first several centuries of the Christian era. He skips from the Bible to nineteenth- and twentieth-century anti-Catholic works. Even if he would not go to original sources, he could have examined Johannes Quasten's *Patrology*, the first three volumes of which were composed in the decade before *Roman Catholicism* was written, or Joseph Tixeront's *History of Dogmas*, an older but standard work. A casual reading of these should have demonstrated to him that from the earliest years distinctive Catholic doctrines were present—belief in the Real Presence, the hierarchy of bishops and priests, papal supremacy, suffrages for the dead—and he should have seen there is little support for the fundamentalist position. Even if he refused to draw the ordinary conclusions from Quasten and Tixeront, he at least would have been put on notice that he had more to consider. He just takes too much for granted.

There is no indication that he has made use of any hardheaded apologetic works by Catholics or that he has tested his arguments against a knowledgeable opponent before reducing them to print. His major sources are people who do not just disagree with Catholicism but who openly oppose it, often for what the reader suspects to be base motives. Boettner accepts at face value any claim made by an enemy of the Church. Even when verification of a charge is easy, he does not bother to check up. If he finds something

unflattering, he prints it.

Take as an example his reliance on William Cave, chaplain to King Charles II, who wrote in *The Lives of the Apostles* that in the Greek original of Eusebius Pamphilius' *Ecclesiastical History*, completed about 325, there is no reference to Peter being Bishop of Rome. Boettner accepts this as sufficient proof that the apostle was never in the capital of the Empire, a fact he wishes to use in debunking the papacy.² He could have checked Cave's assertion easily. Had he looked at the two-volume edition of the *Ecclesiastical History* in the Loeb Classical Library, he would have found on pages 144 and 190 of volume one and page 48 of volume two just what Cave said was not there.

Despite the reliance of so many pamphleteers on Boettner's book, the only thing that makes it seem substantial is its weight in pounds. Its weight in scholarly attainment is nil. It has an index of authors and an index of subjects, each only a page and a half long. In the whole book there are only two dozen footnotes, all of them added to reflect minor changes in the Catholic Church since Vatican II. Within the text biblical passages are properly cited, but references to Catholic works are usually so vague as to discourage checking. A certain Pope is alleged to have said something, but there is no citation. A Catholic author of the seventeenth century supposedly claimed such-and-so, but again no reference. A quotation might be given, but no hint as to its source. Or there might be mention of a book, but no page number. Most statements that in other books would deserve footnotes get nothing at all here. Sources that include both title and page number (and they are rare) are generally to non-Catholic works. Indeed, if this were a book on science or economics, and if it were put out by an academic press, the publisher would have insisted on literally hundreds of notes to back up the equally large number of citations, claims, and interpretations. But we get none of that here.

The lack of citations would not be important if Boettner were merely expounding his own position, but they are crucial when he dredges up what seem to be self-condemnatory admissions by Catholics. He would be under no obligation to burden his book with references if he were only stating what fundamentalism is. But more must be expected of an author who accuses the opposition of knavery and deception.

Although not all works referred to in the body of the text are listed in the bibliography, most are—yet the bibliography names only twenty-three books and three magazines. Only seven of the books, and none of the magazines,

are by Catholics.³ One book, by Fulton Sheen, is an “inspirational” text and, while enjoyable reading, has little to do with the matters discussed in *Roman Catholicism*. A second book is a look at the lives of a few Popes; another is on Catholic principles of politics, a topic hardly touched on by Boettner. Three others are overviews of the Catholic faith written for laymen, not one of which was designed to answer the kinds of attacks Boettner launches.⁴ The seventh book is Philip Hughes’ *A Popular History of the Catholic Church*, an abridgment of his three-volume work *A History of the Church*. As it turns out, Boettner refers to only a few lines from Hughes’ book, and those are taken out of context.⁵

Of the sixteen books by non-Catholics, six are by former Catholic priests: Emmett McLoughlin; L. H. Lehmann; Joseph Zacchello; and Charles Chiniquy, the famous nineteenth-century sensationalist.⁶ There is also an expose by a former nun. To round out the picture, Boettner lists a book by Paul Blanshard, perhaps the best-known professional anti-Catholic of a generation ago. These are the books—written by disaffected ex-Catholics or by people who never have been Catholic but who have made their mark in the world by pushing unadorned bigotry—from which Boettner gets his juiciest information. Relying on them for the straight story on the Catholic Church is like relying on a political candidate to tell you all the good points about his opponent. Surely Boettner would object to an attack on Martin Luther’s theology that made use of works by disgruntled ex-Lutherans but ignored Luther’s own writings. He would say, and rightly so, that such an attack was unbalanced, and that is just the kind of thing a reader might say of *Roman Catholicism* when he discovers how much it relies on tales from angry ex-Catholics.

Now it may well be that a man leaving one religion for another can write fairly, without bitterness, about the one he left behind. After all, John Henry Newman did just that in his autobiography, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*. But it stands to reason that most people who suddenly think they have an urge to write about their change of beliefs just want to vent their frustrations or justify their actions. Their books should be read and used with discretion, and they should not be used at all as explanations of the beliefs of their old religion if the books betray the least hint of rancor. Unfortunately, Boettner cannot keep away from such books.

Because of his reliance on disgruntled former Catholics, Boettner has absolutely no appreciation of the Catholic religion from the inside. He has

made little effort to learn what the Catholic Church says about itself and how Catholics answer the objections he makes. What “inside information” he has comes from people who can hardly be trusted to tell the Catholic side of the story. In case after case, no matter what the topic, Boettner provides only a statement of the fundamentalist position, which he then juxtaposes to a caricature of the Catholic position as set out by one of the ex-priests. Without fail, whenever the Catholic position looks foolish, as it often does in his book, it is because it has been entirely misstated. Boettner is not content with honestly giving the Catholic view and then explaining why he considers it wrong; he must give a parody of the Catholic view, and then he refutes *that*.

But that is not all. There are literally hundreds of errors of fact in this book. In any ten consecutive pages one can find ten palpable blunders. These are real mistakes, not innocent things such as typographical errors. There are major errors, and there are minor ones, and they lead one to ask at what point does sloppiness become more than mere negligence? When does it show actual bad faith, a deliberate unwillingness to do one’s homework?

Consider the case of Bishop Josip Strossmayer. First take the story as given by Boettner in his chapter on the infallibility of the Pope. This doctrine was formally defined at the First Vatican Council in 1870: Before the definition was voted on by the assembled prelates, some spoke against ratifying it. One who did so was Strossmayer. Here is how Boettner recounts the story:

Among those who opposed the decree was the scholarly archbishop [actually, bishop] Strossmayer, who made a famous speech in which he declared boldly: “I have set myself to study with the most serious attention the Old and New Testaments, and I have asked these venerable monuments of truth to make known to me if the holy pontiff, who presides here, is the true successor of St. Peter, vicar of Christ, and the infallible doctor of the church. I find in the apostolic days no question of a pope, successor to St. Peter, the vicar of Jesus Christ, any more than a Mohammed who did not then exist. Now having read the whole New Testament, I declare before God, with my hand raised to that great crucifix, that I have found no trace of the papacy as it exists at this moment.”

Immediately after that long quotation, Boettner gives what he says is the end of the speech. The last sentence reads: “I conclude victoriously, with history, with reason, with logic, with good sense, and with a Christian conscience, that Jesus Christ did not confer any supremacy on St. Peter, and that the bishops of Rome did not become sovereigns of the church, but only by confiscating one by one all the rights of the episcopate.”⁷

Strong language, eh? Boettner gives no source for these words attributed to

Strossmayer, and with good reason. Their source was not Strossmayer. Had Boettner turned to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, he would have discovered half a page on “the scholarly archbishop”, and he would have discovered that the speech is a well-known forgery, composed by a former Augustinian priest named José Augustín de Escudero.⁸

What was Strossmayer’s real position on infallibility? Did he oppose the promulgation of the dogma? Yes, he did. He opposed it for ecumenical reasons. He was the bishop of Diakovar, in what is now Yugoslavia. For years he had been working for a reunification of the Eastern Orthodox churches with the Catholic Church. He thought such a reunification was a real possibility and that the formal promulgation of the doctrine of papal infallibility would be an obstacle.

Boettner explains none of this, but the facts were easily accessible to him. Read again the words attributed to Strossmayer. Do they read like the words of a European who obtained a doctorate in philosophy at twenty and a doctorate in theology at twenty-seven, who taught canon law at the University of Vienna, who was praised for his “remarkably good Latin” by the Pope? No, they read like the words of a longtime Protestant. Note, too, the sloppy way the forgery was drawn up. This “scholarly archbishop” prefaces his declaration with the clause “now having read the whole New Testament”, which apparently means he had never gone through the sacred text before. At the time of Vatican I Strossmayer was fifty-five. Are we to believe this learned and mature man had never read the New Testament before the convening of the Council?

Boettner’s great failing with respect to this incident is that he took no pains at all to investigate the Catholic version of the story. It would have taken ten minutes at a library to discover that the speech was not what it purported to be. He did not have to believe the *Catholic Encyclopedia* or the numerous ecclesiastical histories written by Catholics, yet he should have become suspicious when they said the speech is a forgery. He should have done further homework. But he was not as interested in accuracy as in sensationalism, which is always the enemy of truth. This story is such a great blow against the Catholic Church—why spoil it with the facts?

This gaffe about Strossmayer’s speech is bad enough, but it is prefaced by a worse one. The beginning of the chapter on the infallibility of the Pope presents the reader with Boettner’s explanation of what Vatican I decreed. First he accurately quotes *Pastor Aeternus*, which states that the Pope is

infallible when “he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when in discharge of the office of pastor and doctor of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme Apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine regarding faith and morals to be held by the universal Church.”⁹

Then comes the blooper. Boettner says, “Infallibility is not claimed for every statement made by the pope [true enough], but only for those made when he is speaking *ex cathedra*, that is, seated in his papal chair, the chair of St. Peter, and speaking in his official capacity as head of the church.”¹⁰ At the end of the sentence is an asterisk, which takes the reader to this footnote: “A scientific commission appointed by pope Paul VI in July, 1968, to investigate the antiquity of the ‘Chair of St. Peter’. . . reported early in 1969 that the chair dates from the late ninth century. . . .” The point is that Peter’s real chair does not exist, so a Pope cannot sit in it. Since, by official decree of Vatican I, he is infallible only when sitting in Peter’s chair, he cannot issue infallible definitions at all. The Catholic Church is refuted by its own archaeology!

Boettner entirely misconstrues the meaning of *ex cathedra*. It indeed translates as “from the throne” or “from the chair”, but it does not mean the Pope has to be sitting in the chair Peter owned for his definition to be infallible. To speak “from the chair” is to speak in an official capacity, as when we say a judge speaks “from the bench”, even if he makes his ruling while standing in the courthouse hallway. This is another mistake Boettner could have avoided had he turned to a dictionary or encyclopedia.

Although he says infallibility extends only to matters of faith and morals, and then only when a Pope makes an official pronouncement addressed to all Christians, Boettner does not understand the principles he quotes. He apparently does not realize that a Pope is not claimed to be infallible when he tries to predict tomorrow’s weather or solve today’s arithmetic problem. This should be apparent to Boettner, but it is not, as shown by the following example. He relates that in the year 1590 Sixtus V issued an edition of the Vulgate which he declared to be final, and prohibited under an anathema the publication of any new editions thereafter unless they should be exactly like that one. However, he died soon after, and scholars found numerous errors in his edition. Two years later a new edition was published under pope Clement VIII, and that is the one in general use today. Clearly Sixtus V was in error—another example of the absurdity of that doctrine which holds that the pope is infallible in matters of faith and morals.¹¹

But a Pope's order that no one should publish a version of the Vulgate differing from the official version has nothing to do with faith and morals. It is not a matter of faith that any particular edition of the Bible is without printing errors or that it has been translated accurately. The order by Sixtus V was merely a matter of discipline; it did not define a point of doctrine or of morals, a distinction Boettner does not appreciate.

One of his key points in *Roman Catholicism* is that "Romanism" must be untrue because in so many particulars it differs from the Christianity of the New Testament. Over the centuries, he says, the Catholic Church has added beliefs, rituals, and customs that contradict what is found in the Bible. He calls this "the melancholy evidence of Rome's steadily increasing departure from the simplicity of the Gospel", and he claims "human inventions have been substituted for Bible truth and practice".¹²

His point is that Catholicism cannot be the religion established by Christ because it has all these "extras", forty-five of which he lists under the title "Some Roman Catholic Heresies and Inventions".¹³ A few he examines at greater length later in the book, but most are mentioned once here and then conveniently forgotten. Although his listing takes up little space, its tone is representative of that of the book as a whole. Consider a few of the "inventions".

Item: "Making the sign of the cross. . . [A.D.] 300".¹⁴ That's it. That's the whole charge, that the sign of the Cross was not "invented" until well into the Christian era. Actually, Christians began making the sign of the Cross at a very early date. The theologian Tertullian, writing in 211, said, "We furrow our forehead with the sign [of the Cross]."¹⁵ Making the sign was already an old custom when he wrote. It may have been common even while some of the apostles were alive. But the mistake Boettner makes in the antiquity of the practice is not the important thing. The real question is: Why does he include this point at all? The answer: because the sign of the Cross is something not found in the pages of the New Testament. The reader is to conclude that it must be contrary to Christianity, yet that makes little sense. In fact, such a principle undermines even Boettner's own fundamentalism.

After all, fundamentalists meet for worship on Sunday, yet there is no evidence in the Bible that corporate worship was to be made on Sundays. The Jewish Sabbath, or day of rest, was, of course, Saturday. It was the Catholic Church that decided Sunday should be the day of worship for Christians, in honor of the Resurrection. And what about the form of fundamentalist

services: hymns, readings, preaching? No mention is made in the New Testament of the form of worship (other than that set out at the Last Supper, which gives the outline of the Mass). If Catholicism has changed matters of practice or customs over the centuries, fundamentalism has done the same. The proper question is not whether the Church founded by Christ looks today exactly as it did then (if that is the criterion, then his Church cannot be found anywhere), but whether what purports to be his Church has kept all the same beliefs, while understanding them better and drawing out their implications more deeply, even if in external practices the Church has developed and changed over the years.

Item: “Priests began to dress differently from laymen. . .500”. So what? The same charge can be brought against fundamentalist preachers who conduct services while dressed in choir robes. Boettner’s statement happens to be true, but it proves nothing. The main vestment worn by priests during Mass is the chasuble. It is really nothing more than a stylized Roman overcoat. In the sixth century, while fashions changed around them, for liturgical purposes priests kept to the clothing they had used for some time. They did not adopt special dress for Mass, but, as everyday fashions changed over time, their dress began to stand out.

On very formal occasions today, such as a presidential inauguration, the principal players wear top hats and tails. You do not otherwise see that kind of clothing anymore, but remember that Abraham Lincoln wore the equivalent as his regular attire. The present-day use of top hats and tails is another example of dress for a special occasion being frozen in a particular style. It just so happens that priests’ vestments are much older than top hats.

Item: “Extreme unction. . . 526”. This single line is no doubt intended to make the reader believe the Catholic Church invented this sacrament, which is also known as the anointing of the sick, five centuries after Christ. Notice that Boettner makes no effort to give the Church’s explanation of the sacrament’s origin. Why? Because the origin is found in the New Testament itself: “Is one of you sick? Let him send for the presbyters of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Lord’s name. Prayer offered in faith will restore the sick man, and the Lord will give him relief; if he is guilty of sins, they will be pardoned” (James 5:14-15). This scriptural injunction was followed from the earliest days of the Church. If Boettner wanted to say this sacrament was “invented”, he should have said it was “invented” while the apostles were still alive, but that, of course, would give

the sacrament legitimacy.

Item: “Latin language, used in prayer and worship, imposed by [Pope] Gregory I. . . 600”. Now it is true that Latin was used in worship in the year 600. The Church spread from the Greek-speaking East to the Latin-speaking West in apostolic times. One of Paul’s epistles was written to the Christians in Latin-speaking Rome. It should cause no raised eyebrows to learn that worship was undertaken in the vernacular, which was Greek in much of the East and Latin in the West. What is Boettner’s point? Maybe his complaint is that the Pope “imposed” Latin, forbidding other languages to be used. In the West, Latin did come to be used in the Mass to the exclusion of vernacular languages (such as French, German, and English) that developed centuries later because Latin became the official language of the Catholic Church—something it still is. (Vatican documents of importance are still issued in authoritative Latin versions.) Are we to conclude that there is some mystery about it? Well, there probably is, to people who do not read Latin, just as there is mystery in French to those who know only English.

So what is Boettner trying to say with this “invention”? Perhaps he wants to suggest that, until recently, priests used Latin, even after the people had turned to vernacular tongues, in order to keep secret such things as what was happening during Mass. That theory does not hold up, since even Catholics who knew no Latin knew what was going on at Mass—all they had to do was look on the right-hand pages of their missals to see the translation of the Latin that was on the facing pages. If Church authorities were trying to keep laymen ignorant about the Mass, by encouraging the use of missals they approached their task in a self-defeating way.

Item: “Worship of the cross, images, and relics authorized in. . . 786”. Do Catholics give slivers of wood, carvings of marble, and pieces of bone the kind of adoration they give God? That is what Boettner seems to say. What if a Catholic were to say to him, “I saw you kneeling with your Bible in your hands. Why do you worship a book?” He would rightly answer that he does not worship a book. He uses the Bible as an aid to prayer. Likewise, Catholics do not worship the Cross or images or relics. They use these physical objects to remind themselves of Christ and his special friends, the saints in heaven. The man who keeps a picture of his family in his wallet does not worship his wife and children, but he honors them. The woman who keeps her parents’ picture on the mantel does not subscribe to ancestor worship; the picture just reminds her of them so she can honor them. (Recall

Ex 20:12: “Honor thy father and thy mother.”) No one really thinks the pictures are themselves the objects of worship.

The origin of Boettner’s story is this. In the Byzantine Empire there developed what was known as the Iconoclastic heresy, which held that all images (statues, paintings, mosaics) of saints and of God must be destroyed on the theory that they were meant to be worshiped. Eventually, around 786, this heresy was defeated, and the old custom, going back to the first century, of permitting artistic representations was again allowed. Boettner has the date right; he just does not understand the story.

Item: “Baptism of bells instituted by Pope John XIII. . . 965”. What is the reader supposed to make of this? Most non-Catholics realize that Catholics baptize infants, but bells? If Catholics think they can baptize bells, why not baptize automobiles or any other inanimate object? The charge, if true, does make the Church look silly—and in a sense it really is true. There was indeed a “baptism of bells”, but it was not a baptism. When a church received new bells for its tower, the bells were blessed, usually by the local bishop. Any object can be blessed, a blessing being a dedication to a sacred purpose. The ceremony used in the blessing of bells was reminiscent in some ways of the ceremony used in baptism (the bells were even given nicknames), so in popular usage it came to be called the “baptism of bells”, although no Catholic thought the bells actually received a sacrament. The phrase is therefore wholly innocent, but when anti-Catholics refer to it in just a few words it looks suspicious.

Item: “Celibacy of the priesthood, decreed by pope Gregory VII (Hildebrand). . . 1079”. Anti-Catholics take considerable delight in noting that some of the apostles, including Peter, were married and that for centuries Catholic priests were allowed to marry. Catholics do not deny that some early Popes were married and that celibacy, for priests in the Latin (Western) Rite, did not become mandatory until the early Middle Ages. Anti-Catholic writers generally fail to note that all along married men have been eligible for ordination in the Eastern rites. Celibacy has never been mandatory in those rites, but in the Latin Rite it has been, as a matter of discipline. It came to be thought in the West that priests could more perfectly fulfill their duties if they remained unmarried. This follows Paul’s advice.

After saying he wished those to whom he was writing were, like himself, unmarried (1 Cor 7:7-9), Paul said he thought celibacy was the best state in which to be (1 Cor 7:26), noting that “he who is unmarried is concerned with

God's claim, asking how he is to please God; whereas the married man is concerned with the world's claim, asking how he is to please his wife" (1 Cor 7:32-33). When a man becomes a priest in the Latin Rite, he knows that he will not be able to marry. Marriage is a good thing (in fact, Catholics acknowledge Christ elevated marriage to a sacrament), but it is something priests are willing to forgo for the sake of being better priests. No one is forced to be a priest (or a nun, for that matter; nuns also do not marry) so no Catholic is forced to be celibate. Those who want to take the vows of the religious life should not object to having to follow the rules. That does not mean that the rules, as found at any one time, are ideal or cannot be modified—celibacy is a disciplinary, not a doctrinal, injunction—but it does mean that it is unfair to imply from the rules, as Boettner has, that the Catholic religion scorns marriage.

Item: "Transubstantiation proclaimed by Pope Innocent III. . . 1215". The implication is that transubstantiation was not believed until 1215—that it was, indeed, an "invention". The facts are otherwise. Transubstantiation is just the technical term used to describe what happens when the bread and wine used at Mass are turned into the actual Body and Blood of Christ. The belief that this occurs has been held from the earliest times. It stems from the sixth chapter of John's Gospel, the eleventh chapter of First Corinthians, and the several accounts of the Last Supper. As centuries passed, theologians exercised their reason on the belief to understand more completely how such a thing could happen and what its happening would imply. Because some of them, in trying to explain the Real Presence, developed unsound theories,¹⁶ it became evident that more precise terminology was needed to ensure the integrity of the belief. The word transubstantiation was finally chosen because it eliminated certain unorthodox interpretations of the doctrine, and the term was formally imposed at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. So the use of the technical term was new, but not the doctrine. Similarly, although the term Trinity was first used by Theophilus of Antioch about 181, Christians certainly believed in the doctrine from apostolic times. They may not have understood its ramifications as they are understood today, but they believed in the Trinity. The doctrine was not invented when the official term was coined.

Item: "Auricular confession of sins to a priest instead of to God, instituted by pope Innocent III, in Lateran Council. . . 1215". It is charges such as this that make one doubt the good faith of professional anti-Catholics. It would

have taken little to discover the antiquity of auricular confession—and even less to learn that Catholics do not tell their sins to a priest “instead of to God”, but to God *through* a priest, appointed by our Lord as an *alter Christus*, or “other Christ”, an official stand-in for Christ.

Origen, writing around 244, referred to the sinner who “does not shrink from declaring his sin to a priest of the Lord”.¹⁷ Cyprian of Carthage, writing seven years later, said, “Finally, of how much greater faith and more salutary fear are they who . . . confess to the priests of God in a straightforward manner and in sorrow, making an open declaration of conscience.”¹⁸ In the fourth century Aphraates gave this advice to priests: “If anyone uncovers his wound before you, give him the remedy of repentance. And he that is ashamed to make known his weakness, encourage him so that he will not hide it from you. And when he has revealed it to you, do not make it public.”¹⁹

These men, writing as much as a thousand years before the Lateran Council of 1215, were referring to a practice that was already old and well established, a practice stemming from apostolic times. Christ commissioned the apostles this way: “When you forgive men’s sins, they are forgiven, when you hold them bound, they are held bound” (Jn 20:23). Clearly, no priest can forgive sins on Christ’s behalf unless first told the sins by the penitent. Auricular confession is implied in the very institution of the sacrament. The Lateran Council did not “invent” the practice; it merely reaffirmed it while emphasizing the importance of penance.

Item: “Adoration of the wafer (host), decreed by pope Honorius III. . . 1220”. What the reader is supposed to think, apparently, is that Catholics worship the bread used at Mass. They do not. What they worship is Christ, and they believe the bread and the wine are turned into his actual Body and Blood, including not only his human nature, but also his divine nature. If Catholics are right about that, then surely the host deserves to be worshiped, since it really is God. This matter was properly dealt with in 1769 by Samuel Johnson, who was an Anglican, not a Catholic. His biographer, James Boswell, asked him about “the idolatry of the Mass”. “Sir,” replied Dr. Johnson, “there is no idolatry in the Mass. [Catholics] believe God to be there, and they worship him.”²⁰ So, if Catholics are right, then a Pope would be correct in decreeing that the host should be worshiped, just as he would be right to say Jesus should be worshiped if he were to walk into the room. Boettner should direct his complaint not at some nonexistent worship of

ordinary bread, but at Catholics' notion that the bread becomes something other than bread.

Item: "Bible forbidden to laymen, placed on the Index of Forbidden Books by the Council of Valencia. . . 1229". This looks damaging, but the first thing to note is that there are several errors here. The first is that the Index was established in 1543, so a council held in 1229 hardly could have listed a book on it. Second, there apparently never has been a Church council held in Valencia, Spain. Even if there had been, it could not have been held in 1229 because the city was then controlled by the Moors. It is inconceivable that Moslems, who were at war with Spanish Christians and had been off and on for five centuries, would allow Catholic bishops to hold a council in one of their chief cities. The Christian armies did not liberate Valencia from Moorish rule until nine years later, in 1238. So Valencia is out. But there is another possibility, and that is Toulouse, France, where a council (but not an ecumenical council) was indeed held in 1229. And, yes, that council dealt with the Bible, yet here again Boettner errs. He says the Bible was forbidden to laymen; the implication is that no layman anywhere was permitted from that point on to read any Bible. Not so.

The council held in Toulouse dealt with the Albigensian heresy, a variety of Manichaeism, which maintained that marriage is evil because the flesh is evil. From this the heretics concluded that fornication could be no sin because what happens to flesh is of no importance. They even encouraged ritualistic suicide among their members because self-murder, which affected only an evil body, could not be immoral. They opposed the taking of oaths, and this undermined the social order, since feudalism rested on oaths of loyalty to one's superior, much the way our society rests on the security of contracts.

In order to promulgate their views, the Albigensians used vernacular versions of the Bible to "substantiate" their theories. The Church had no complaint about mere translations of the Bible; vernacular versions had been appearing for centuries. But the Albigensians were twisting the Bible to support an immoral moral system. So the bishops at Toulouse restricted the use of the Bible until the heresy was ended. They were trying to stop the heresy's spread because it was the cause of civil unrest and considerable suffering. Their action was a local one, and when the Albigensian problem disappeared, so did the force of their order, which never affected more than southern France. This is hardly the across-the-board prohibition of the Bible

that Boettner, for debating purposes, would like to see but that never existed.

Item: “Cup forbidden to the people at communion by Council of Constance. . . 1414”. The implication is that bishops and priests were trying to keep from laymen something they should have had by rights. The real situation is not hard to understand. The Catholic position has always been that after the Consecration the actual Body and Blood of Christ are contained in the smallest particle of the host or the tiniest drop from the cup. One does not receive only the Body in the host and only the Blood from the cup. If that were so, then for a complete Communion one indeed would need to partake of both. But if both the Body and Blood are contained in each, then the communicant needs to receive only one, if there are good reasons for imposing such a restriction. In 1414 there seemed to be. The first reason was that some people misunderstood the Eucharist and thought it had to be received under both forms because one form contained only the Body and the other only the Blood. By restricting communicants to the host alone the Church emphasized the true doctrine. The other reason was a practical one. In giving the cup to the laity there was a chance the contents would be spilled, so, out of respect, the restriction was imposed.

Item: “Apocryphal books added to the Bible by the Council of Trent. . . 1546”. This is reminiscent of the remark made in *1066 and All That* that at the English Reformation “the pope and his followers seceded from the Church of England”—the difference being that Boettner is serious. The fact is that the Council of Trent did not add to the Bible what Protestants call the apocryphal books. Instead, the Reformers dropped from the Bible books that had been in common use for centuries. The Council of Trent, convened to reaffirm Catholic doctrines and to revitalize the Church, proclaimed that these books always had belonged to the Bible and had to remain in it. After all, it was the Catholic Church, in the fourth century, that officially decided which books composed the canon of the Bible and which did not. The Council of Trent came on the scene about twelve centuries later and merely restated the ancient position.

These “inventions” are representative of the forty-five listed by Boettner. No effort is made to give sources for his charges, and little effort is made to say what the significance of the “inventions” might be. That task is left to innuendo. What Boettner implies is that any belief or practice not found in the pages of the New Testament in plain words must be spurious and must have been instituted for some nefarious purpose.

What he does not point out is that fundamentalism has doctrines and customs that are not found in the Bible either. Many fundamentalist churches, for example, forbid the drinking of wine as sinful, yet Christ not only drank wine—he was even accused of being a drunkard (Lk 7:34)—but he made wine out of water, hardly something he would have done had he disapproved of drinking it. The examples could be multiplied. The fact is that no church looks exactly the same as that of the New Testament era, and, since Christ founded a living Church, one should expect it, like any living thing, to grow and mature, changing somewhat in appearance while maintaining the same identity and substance, holding on to the original deposit of faith while coming to understand it more deeply. The real question is not why Catholicism has produced “inventions” but why one thinks Christ’s Church should not have.

The imaginativeness displayed in Boettner’s “inventions” is representative of the writing one finds throughout *Roman Catholicism*. Consider some of his other comments. He calls All Souls’ Day, November 2, “Purgatory Day”,²¹ a term never used by Catholics because the feast is not in commemoration of purgatory but of the souls there. He thinks the sacrament of orders involves not just the ordination of priests, but the “consecration of nuns”.²² He believes Our Lady of Guadalupe was really “a goddess worshipped by the Indians in Mexico”.²³ As an argument against monasticism, he says Christ “did not withdraw himself from the world, nor did he teach his disciples to do so”.²⁴ Boettner forgets that Christ spent forty days in the desert in preparation for his public ministry (Mt 4:1-11; Lk 4:1-13), and if that is not withdrawing oneself from the world, what is?

More common than these silly mistakes are Boettner’s appeals to sensationalism. He says “the feeling of fear and dread of the priest, so characteristic of people in Romanist lands, is comparable only to the fear and dread that pagan people have for the witch doctor”,²⁵ which demonstrates how little he knows of either. He argues against the Real Presence by saying the Catholic understanding of the Eucharist amounts to “cannibalism”.²⁶ He suggests the Church encourages devotion to Mary because pilgrimages made in her honor bring “huge revenues to the Vatican”.²⁷ What is more, Mary is thought of by Catholics “as a kind of fourth person of the Blessed Trinity”.²⁸ He believes a “large number of gangsters and crooked politicians in the big cities . . . have maintained their standing in the church while continuing

uninterruptedly their evil practices. . . . It is generally accepted that Romanists, having been to Mass, especially on Sunday, can do about as they please the remainder of the day.”²⁹

Boettner approves of the opinion of another writer that “the intellectual and moral level of priests is not nearly as high as, for instance, that of teachers and doctors, and. . . only a minority have any exceptional ability or deep religious feeling”.³⁰ He asks, “Why is it. . . that the Roman Catholics of Southern Ireland are so inferior to their Protestant neighbors in Northern Ireland?” His answer is a quotation from Charles Chiniquy, who said “the principal cause of the degradation of Ireland is the enslavement of the Irish women by means of the confessional”.³¹ And, according to a book Boettner cites, young women who enter the convent are taught to hate their parents.³² The list could go on, but why bother?

Bishop Fulton Sheen said that few people in America hate the Catholic religion, but many people hate what they mistakenly believe is the Catholic religion—and that if what is hated really were the Catholic religion, Catholics would hate it, too. Confusing lists—lists intended to cause confusion, such as the one published in *Roman Catholicism*—and gratuitous slurs have done much to foster this hatred and confusion. What is more, they have discouraged fundamentalists from finding out what the Catholic religion really is, and that is a disservice to both fundamentalists and Catholics.

A reader can forgive an author a few mistakes. Perhaps the publication schedule did not allow all the checking and rechecking he might have wanted. Maybe the book’s editor was incompetent. The typesetter may have erred. But when the mistakes are so gross and so frequent as Boettner’s, when there is almost no effort to present the other side’s point of view, when the “authorities” one relies on to state the Catholic position are mainly professional Catholic baiters—when all this happens, can the reader be blamed for thinking the book was composed in bad faith?

Like others before him, Loraine Boettner has found an enemy of his own fashioning. He castigates it, misrepresents it, ridicules it, but it is not the Catholic religion as Catholics know it, and the “history” he presents is not the history of the Catholic Church. He has given the public what may be fundamentalism’s most sustained attack on “Romanism”. It is an attack that has enjoyed, so far, a certain success, but its manifest inadequacy suggests that it, too, will pass. *Roman Catholicism* has been an effective propaganda tool only because its arguments were not challenged early enough by

Catholics. Now that is changing. Eventually Boettner's book and the anti-Catholic movement relying on it will be widely appreciated to be the embarrassments they are. Toward that end, it may be profitable to examine some of the groups and persons that have drawn their inspiration from Boettner.

Chapter 3

A Mission to Catholics

Outside the Baptist church where the head of Mission to Catholics International was to speak there was a large table filled with Catholic artifacts. It was set up for the titillation of the congregants. People were shaking their heads over what they saw, wondering how these pagan trinkets could be used by folks who called themselves Christians. Bartholomew F. (“Bart”) Brewer, a former Discalced Carmelite priest, was going to tell these California Baptists the dark secrets of the Catholic Church. He had been to this church before, but they were anxious to hear more stories about the people trapped in Romanism. Next week he would be halfway across the country, telling the same things to others, some old friends, some new listeners.

Ruth Brewer, Bart’s wife, stood behind the table and explained what these peculiar items were. She pointed out holy cards, rosaries, medals, scapulars, crucifixes. The main attractions were a chalice filled with small hosts and a large priest’s host, all presumably unconsecrated. They were brittle with age, but quite serviceable—“Cookie Christs”, as some opponents of the Church call them. To one side were some of the dozens of tracts published by Mission to Catholics, each attacking some facet of Catholicism, and books and cassette tapes that the Brewers’ ministry made available. It was a festive occasion.¹

The service began with the customary hymns, a few homiletic words from the minister, and announcements from Brother This and Sister That. Then Bart Brewer was introduced, and he told them what he had told them before, and they loved it. “Amen, brother!” someone shouted, and he was echoed by others in the small church. “Amen, amen!” Heads nodded in agreement at each revelation of Catholic iniquity and shook in despair as the listeners were told of the doom awaiting Romanists if they did not convert to Christianity.

The talk was part anatomical, part autobiographical. Brewer dissected Catholicism, using quotations from the Bible to show how it strayed from the

New Testament. The treatments of Catholic doctrine and history were cursory and, unsurprisingly, skewed; there was no effort to suggest what the Catholic rejoinders might be. He mentioned experiences as a priest, how his reading the Bible convinced him the Catholic Church was not the Church established by Christ. He spoke about his ministry, which started small but, although still small in terms of personnel (his wife, at least one paid assistant, and several volunteers to handle the mail), had grown so that he regularly crisscrossed the country and mailed out hundreds of thousands of tracts and thousands of books² and cassettes each year.³

He ended his talk the way he ends them all, with an appeal for action. If Catholics do not leave the Church of Rome, he said, they will be damned. Like the Moslems, like the Jews, they will go to hell, and their pious actions will not help them in the least. They must be saved, and it is up to real Christians to take the gospel to them. The way to do that is to wean them from the Catholic Church, showing them its errors, how it contradicts the Bible, how it has been built on paganism.

A good way to start, he said, is by forming a committee for evangelization. The members pray together and then head for the front, the lines of battle being drawn outside Catholic churches. There, as people leave Mass on Sunday morning, Mission to Catholics tracts are distributed. (The most zealous evangelists might, after the last Mass and despite treading on pagan ground, enter the churches and, going even further than Brewer advises, slip tracts into missalettes. That way Catholics would read the truth about the Mass during the Mass itself.)⁴

Of course, distributing tracts implies fielding questions, so the committee members would have to do more than just pray in preparation for their ministry. They would have to study. First would come Scripture. Already avid Bible readers, they would have to redouble their efforts to anticipate any Catholic rebuttals. Then, of course, they would review the Mission to Catholics materials, including its tracts; monthly newsletter, *Challenger*; and Bart Brewer's autobiography, *Pilgrimage from Rome*.⁵ Next, they could turn to literature put out by other anti-Catholic organizations. There would be much to learn, but much to learn from. Indeed, there is no shortage of anti-Catholic materials and no shortage of anti-Catholic organizations. This is a boom industry, and Bart Brewer is on the cutting edge. But his is not the only group convincing people to leave St. Miscellanius' for Good Book Baptist, and Mission to Catholics was not even first on the scene, nor has it received

the most press.

At the fringe, and therefore garnering the most publicity, are Tony Alamo and Jack Chick. Alamo's is the ministry that distributes posters claiming that the Catholic Church owns all the major media—which, if true, would at least demonstrate that the Church is the worst-managed organization in the world, since it cannot even instruct its employees to write good copy about itself. Chick's is the outfit that publishes the *Alberto* comic books and pocket-sized booklets, also illustrated, that reveal secrets hidden even from Maria Monk. These two groups account for many column inches, but few conversions. They are the perfect bogeymen: frightening in visage, but essentially harmless. To be converted by them, one already has to be, mentally, a lost cause, the kind of person who would as likely support flat-Earthism or preach a diet of yak milk and powdered sparrow eggs.

More responsible, if that is the word, and certainly more effective, are groups such as the Conversion Center, Jimmy Swaggart Ministries, Christians Evangelizing Catholics, and Mission to Catholics International. Some have been around for decades and have seen themselves revived by the renewed interest in anti-Catholicism. Others rely on television and rake in a bundle, part of it, ironically enough, from Catholics. But most anti-Catholic organizations are small, confining their work to a single state or even to a single city. Of all the groups, large or small, Mission to Catholics has the greatest variety of literature for sale and is surely one of the most effective in producing conversions.

Bart Brewer's account of his conversion to fundamentalism appeared first in a tract, *The Conversion of a Catholic Priest*. It was expanded into *Pilgrimage from Rome*, published in 1982 by what is perhaps the leading anti-Catholic publisher, Bob Jones University Press. The book, although more complete than the tract, is less a self-revelation than a course in anti-Catholicism set in the first person.

Most people think Catholics convert to fundamentalism because they conclude the Church is too "liberal" dogmatically and that they convert to modernist religions or no religion because the Church is perceived to be too "conservative". Bart Brewer's conversion throws these notions for a loop. His conversion to a more "conservative" Christianity came about through what is generally regarded as a "liberal" motive: dislike of celibacy.

He was ordained in 1957, at age twenty-eight, at the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D. C. for the Discalced Carmelites.

Shortly thereafter he was assigned to the Philippines. There he promptly got involved romantically with a high school girl, and his bishop as promptly sent him packing for home. He left the Carmelites and became a secular priest, working in a parish in San Diego. “My psychological motivation for celibacy was decreasing rapidly”, he wrote.⁶ “I was not at all hesitant then [when Pope John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council] to be outspoken in my anticipation that the law of celibacy would be removed.” When it was not, “for the first time I doubted the authority of my church, not in religious pride, but in true sincerity”.

He admitted recognizing that “celibacy was not dogma but tradition and church law”, and he said that throughout his religious schooling (“four years of the prep, two years of the novitiate, three years of philosophy, and four years of theology”), “never once did I question one iota of Roman Catholic teaching”. It is a little hard to see how the Church’s refusal to change a mere disciplinary rule could result in Brewer’s doubting the authority of the Church—the wisdom of the Church’s leadership, perhaps, but its authority?

Sounding like a modernist shedding his Catholic past, Brewer “soon realized that to think and to reason on one’s own, without the help of Mother Church, was not sin”, although nowhere has he cited a Catholic authority that suggests thinking on one’s own is sinful. He found himself working in Long Beach as a Navy chaplain, going home each night to his mother’s apartment, where the two of them would listen to fundamentalist radio preachers. They “began to question teachings such as purgatory, the immaculate conception of Mary, the assumption of Mary, and the seven sacraments in the light of Scripture. The very last sacrament we were willing to relinquish in the light of Scripture was the Holy Eucharist”, which seems particularly odd since Fulton Sheen, no slouch on matters of conversion and unconversion, once remarked that, as a rule, the first thing to go is one’s belief in the Real Presence.

Brewer’s mother, then in her sixties, was secretly baptized in a Protestant church, not telling him so he would not rush his decision. But when his stint with the Navy was up shortly thereafter, they packed their bags and took off for San Francisco, with hardly a fare-thee-well to his bishop. His next task, he said, was to determine what the ultimate religious authority might be. He found his authority in the Bible.

It was in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, which he joined because his mother already had, that Brewer met his future wife. Only after he and Ruth

were married and he had served as pastor of an Adventist church for some time did he discover that the writings of Ellen G. White, the founder of the sect, were to be considered as inspired as the Bible. That, he said, was too much to take, so he resigned his pastorship. (He did not explain how he could have been an Adventist minister and not have known the status of Mrs. White's writings, just as it must be the rare Mormon elder who does not know the Book of Mormon is placed on a par with Scripture.)

He and Ruth, with their young son, returned to San Diego, where he decided to begin an organization that would help Catholics convert to fundamentalism. "I felt there was a real need for a church that would bridge the gap between Catholicism and Protestantism. Many felt uncomfortable or afraid of Protestant churches, but being a former priest, I believed, would help them feel more comfortable in leaving their church. I understood their frustration, I had faced their questions, I had experienced the same difficult decision to leave." He never did establish his own church; Mission to Catholics is a traveling ministry. Each weekend Brewer speaks at one or more Protestant churches, almost all of them Baptist, and solicits both financial aid and recruits. The recruits are trained in the techniques of distributing tracts and adroitly avoiding tough questions. (They routinely fall back on the line "let me ask my pastor".) Each week thousands of tracts are mailed out.

Most are written by Brewer himself. Others bear the names of other former priests, such as Mark Pena; Anthony Pezzotta; and L. H. Lehmann, author of *Out of the Labyrinth*. Bob Jones, chancellor of Bob Jones University, has his name on one Mission to Catholics tract, *The Church of Rome in Perspective*. It is a reprint of an article he wrote for a magazine, *Faith for the Family*, distributed by his school, and is perhaps the most ill-tempered tract published by Mission to Catholics. Its invective, only occasionally matched in Brewer's own writings, which are pointed enough, makes one wonder about the temptations one must undergo in a ministry such as this.

Jones begins by saying, "Pope Paul VI, archpriest of Satan, a deceiver and an antichrist, has, like Judas, gone to his own place." The tract goes downhill from there. At one point Jones attempts to raise the level of discussion, if only momentarily, by citing a diary kept by Bernard Berenson, the famous art collector and critic (who was, by the way, an Episcopalian). Here is what Jones says:

A pope must be an opportunist, a tyrant, a hypocrite, and a deceiver or he cannot be a pope. Bernard Berenson, in his *Rumor and Reflection* (a sort of notebook which he kept while hiding from the Germans in the hills above Florence during the Second World War), tells about the death of an early twentieth-century pope as described by his personal physician. When they came to give him the last rites, the pope ordered the priest and acolytes from the room, crying, "Get out of here. The comedy is over."

The gist, then, is that some unidentified Pope, knowing his end was at hand, acknowledged that his office and religion were jokes and that he had lived a he. Compare what Jones gives with what Berenson actually wrote:

Yesterday a friend was here, a Roman of good family, closely related to the late Cardinal Vannutelli and thus in touch with the Vatican, He told me that soon after the death of Pope Benedict XV, his own father was dying. A priest was called in, but the father refused to see him. Thinking to comfort the son, the priest said: "Don't take it hard. Such things will happen nowadays. Why, the late Holy Father on his deathbed sent away the priests with: 'Off with you, the play is over' " (*la commedia efinita*). His Holiness surely meant *commedia* as *divina*, Divine

Comedy like the title of Dante's masterpiece.⁷

The problem is not just that Jones did not report the words accurately or that he attributed the story to the Pope's physician. The problem is that he did not know (or care) what the Pope was referring to when he said *la commedia efinita*. If Jones were to read the *Divine Comedy*, he would be sorely disappointed to find in it no guffaws or rib-tickling jokes, and the reason is that the word "comedy" is used in a much older sense than the one having to do with humor. Berenson was right to translate *la commedia efinita* as "the play is over". Another way to put it might be "the drama of my life is over", which is hardly the confession of duplicity Jones wishes us to think the Pope made.

To what extent has Bart Brewer allowed himself to become like some of the people with whom he rubs shoulders? In private discussions he is invariably polite, and in his writings and in public talks he professes love for individual Catholics, yet he collaborates with people such as Bob Jones, who is unable to make the same claim with a straight face. The influence of such people shows. *Challenger* contains innumerable misrepresentations of Catholic doctrines and history, and Brewer's penchant for them no doubt comes from his imprudence in his choice of accomplices, who care little about accuracy. Apparently he works on the principle that the enemy of my enemy is my friend, but that is courting danger. He should keep in mind C. S. Lewis' remark that when supping with the devil, one needs to use a long

spoon.⁸

Brewer has made the same mistake Loraine Boettner made when he wrote *Roman Catholicism*. Boettner relied heavily on professional anti-Catholics such as Lehmann, Charles Chiniquy (a nineteenth-century sensationalist every bit as reliable as Maria Monk), and Paul Blanshard. Now Blanshard, the chief anti-Catholic writer of a generation ago, was not even a Christian—in fact, he was a secular humanist—yet Boettner had no qualms about quarrying his work for rocks to throw at the Church. The claim of leading fundamentalists that their attacks on the Catholic religion are made out of love for individual Catholics loses much of its credibility because they are unwilling to decline the use of unfair tactics. One might say they are unwilling to wage a just war; they want to do battle, and they do not hesitate to use any weapon at hand, no matter how foul.

In a way, of course, this is good, since much of what they write unintentionally repels. It is difficult for an informed Catholic who studies anti-Catholic literature to refrain from saying, “Here, let *me* do it! I can present your case more convincingly than you can.” Still, there are the numbers. However ineptly the fundamentalist position may be expressed, it draws each year thousands of Catholics out of the Church, and it makes that many more workers for the anti-Catholic movement. No matter how many people shut their minds to fundamentalism because of excesses by fundamentalist writers, countless others embrace that form of Christianity because what they read convinces them of its truth. At the least, they find anti-Catholics writing about issues that seem to matter, that affect their salvation—issues usually ignored by Catholic writers and the diocesan press.

This may account for the popularity of *Challenger*. Typeset on a microcomputer, it is printed on a single sheet of paper folded once to make a four-page self-mailer. It carries no illustrations, other than an occasional reproduction of the cover of *Pilgrimage from Rome*. The front page is usually written by Brewer and features essays on topics such as “Catholics and the Bible”, “The Wealth of Rome”, “Biblical Christians Will Leave Romanism”, and “Is There a Mediatrix?” This is the preachy page.

The second page is always a testimonial from “another ex-Catholic for biblical Christianity”. Stories are given by men and women, young and old. They speak of rather sudden conversions—not generally as quick as the one on the Damascus Road, perhaps, but nothing remotely like the drawn-out process undergone by converts to Catholicism such as John Henry Newman,

Arnold Lunn, or, more recently, Sheldon Vanauken and Thomas Howard. Consider representative examples.

Joanne Diriam⁹ said she had visited the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. “I had been reading about the Pope being in South America. . . . All of a sudden, I could not understand why the ‘poor people’ had to support a church that was obviously extremely rich!. . . I knew that I could no longer be Catholic.” Her explanation makes one think of a story told by Fulton Sheen.¹⁰ He had been giving a retreat to priests, and one of the younger priests asked him during one of his talks why the Church did not liquidate its holdings, sell off the ornaments and artwork, and give everything to the poor. The young man was rather insistent, and he came up to Sheen later and made the same point. Sheen looked at him closely and asked, “How much did you steal?” “What?” was the reply. “How much did you steal?” repeated Sheen. Then the young priest told the truth. He had been stealing from the collection basket, and he justified his acts by saying the Church was too wealthy anyway and could afford the loss.

Joanne Diriam let the cat out of her bag in an aside, noting that when the Pope was in South America, “he had reprimanded those very poor people regarding birth control”. If Sheen were here, he would probably trace her conversion to her dislike of the Church’s position on contraception, her concern being not so much the foreign poor’s access to the pill, but her own. No one, he might say, could be so ignorant of the Church’s temporal condition that the discovery of the existence of a finely ornamented church would trigger an instantaneous conversion. Complaints about the alleged wealth of the Church are always excuses for something else.

Like the others who have decided to “tell all”, Norman Nichols¹¹ was raised a Catholic. When he was about thirty, his “born-again” Baptist roommate convinced him to visit a Baptist church. His landlady, also a Baptist, had been pushing him to go for some time, and he regularly told her no, but he felt he could not refuse his friend. He went and was so moved that he responded to the altar call. “I never did go back to the Roman Catholic Church.” This was a man who claimed to have been well instructed as a Catholic and who said he regularly practiced his religion.

Larry Wise¹² was twenty-eight when he converted. As a Catholic, he had never once read the Bible, but he did read Hal Lindsey’s *Late Great Planet Earth*, and he watched Jack Van Impe on television. He decided to go on one of Van Impe’s Holy Land tours and while on it received an anti-Catholic

tract. When he returned home and went to Mass, “I saw the statues, I remembered the verses: ‘Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven images’ (Ex. 20:4). Then I thought of the Rosary and remembered another verse: ‘For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus’ (1 Tim 2:5). As I sat watching the priest I remembered other verses: ‘A bishop (pastor) must be blameless, the husband of one wife. . . .’ (1 Tim, 3:1-5); ‘Call no man your father upon the earth; for one is your Father, which is in heaven’ (Matt. 23:9).” More verses came to mind (his short tour of the Holy Land apparently having been a cram course in New Testament memorization), and he quickly concluded that he “could no longer participate in a church where the teachings are so contrary to what the Bible teaches”. Like the others, he un-poped.

The third page of each *Challenger* the correspondence page, is devoted to short testimonials and notes of thanks.¹³ No names are given for the writers, only the states of residence. One writer complained that “this area has many wicked ways of life like drinking, dancing, and gambling. The priest usually takes part in these things and doesn’t tell the poor, uninformed people the truth.” Another said, “I have already won my boss and hopefully my brother in St. Louis with the tracts you sent.” A New Yorker wrote, “As of today I am no longer a Catholic. I have been reading the Bible for the last three years, and then a friend gave me *Scriptural Truths for Roman Catholics*, [a tract] from your organization. I would like as many as possible to pass along.” Many people write about trying to convince their spouses or children to convert. One man, reporting success, said, “I was a Catholic for 45 years. My wife and five children have all been saved.” Another reported that “I am an ex-Catholic, now newly born-again, and am encountering much hostility from my family. I need a lot of prayers and help in ministering and witnessing to them.” Some report even bringing their aged parents into fundamentalism.

The fourth page of *Challenger* often sports an ad for *Pilgrimage from Rome* (“one copy: \$6.50; ten copies: \$44.00”) and a list of Brewer’s scheduled talks—one or two each weekend, others during the week, generally at Baptist churches. The list demonstrates that Brewer’s ministry extends across the country, even across the Atlantic—he undertook his first, extensive speaking tour of Europe in 1986. He is constantly on the move, preaching, for instance, at thirteen churches in New York State in one month.¹⁴

This last page of the newsletter also includes requests for prayers, usually

for financial assistance or for the conversion of some straggler. Not all the prayers have been answered in the way desired. In 1981 Mission to Catholics started a daily, fifteen-minute radio program called “Contend for the Faith”, with Brewer as the principal speaker. It was aired first on a station in San Diego, and there were plans to expand into other markets. In a much-ballyhooed campaign, subscribers to *Challenger* anted up ten thousand dollars to get the program started and were asked to pray for its expansion. But contributions from listeners could not meet costs, and the original kitty was quickly depleted. In short order the schedule was cut to Saturdays only. Even that was too expensive, and the program was finally, and quietly, canceled.

Challenger goes out, of course, mainly to committed fundamentalists, some of whom are themselves converts from Catholicism, some of whom are hereditary anti-Catholics. The publication keeps people informed about the work of the organization and provides them, over a period of years, with a fairly complete apologetics course, at least regarding anti-Catholicism.

It is not the newsletter, though, that convinces people to jump ship, to leave the Barque of Peter at fundamentalism’s siren call. That task is left to Mission to Catholics’ books and tapes, but mainly to its many tracts, dozens of them. They are divided into four groups: testimonies of former priests (including one by Brewer himself and one by Charles Chiniquy); testimonies of former nuns (such as *Ex-Nun Finds Peace with God*); testimonies of former Catholic laymen (the Bible being one woman’s *Passport to Freedom*); and miscellaneous tracts, most of them on particular Catholic doctrines or practices. Far and away the most popular tract, if encomiums printed in *Challenger* are any indication, is Brewer’s *Scriptural Truths for Roman Catholics*. Nearly four thousand words of small type, it is the kind of screed that can confuse Catholics right out of the Church—and it has been quite successful in doing just that.

The first section is titled “The True Church”. It tries to demonstrate that it was not Peter but Christ who was the rock mentioned in Matthew 16:18. Brewer rests his argument on an examination of the Greek, a tactic that usually works when his Catholic reader knows no Greek and is not aware the first Gospel was composed in Aramaic, the language Christ spoke. In fact, the argument Brewer makes, if applied to the Aramaic and not just the Greek, actually backfires against him, but he does not let the reader in on that secret. The question of “what the Greek says” is frequently brought up by

fundamentalists. Anti-Catholics, who often know little Greek themselves, are able to make hay with it only because most Catholics know still less.

The next section is on the papacy. Brewer cites some titles given to the Pope, such as “Holy Father”, and, without giving any sources, some claims allegedly made by recent Popes, claims that, taken out of historical context and only a few words at a time, seem rather suspicious to those new to ecclesiastical history. He then lists a few verses of Scripture, such as “Call no one on earth your father” (Mt 23:9) and “Is there a God besides me?” (Is 44:8), the latter given to show, apparently, that the Pope is not divine.

Following this is a short consideration of the priesthood, consisting mainly of highly selective quotations from the Bible. The gist is that only Christ is a priest under the New Dispensation; the Catholic priesthood was foisted on the Church by Cyprian of Carthage and “was part of the merger of paganism with Christianity”. Naturally enough, no look at the priesthood is complete without an excoriation of the Mass.

The fundamentalist understanding, or misunderstanding, is that Catholics believe Christ dies anew at each Mass. This violates Hebrews 7:27, “He died once for all”, and half a dozen other verses in that book, says Brewer. Then he turns to the Real Presence, which he considers to be at best a real symbolism. Again the reader is given a short course in Greek. “When Jesus said, ‘This is my body’ or ‘blood’, He did not ‘change’ the substance, but was explaining that He is the one ‘represented’ by the passover bread and wine. Jesus did not say *touto gignetai*, this has become or is turned into, but *touto esti*, which can only mean this represents or stands for.”

This is a blunder. True, *touto gignetai* means “this has become”, and, true, the sacred text does not read *touto gignetai*, but which Catholic claimed it does? When it comes to the meaning of *touto esti*, which is indeed found in the text, Brewer has things backward. As any Greek dictionary will show, *esti* is simply the verb “to be”. It means “is”. It means “represents” only secondarily, just as “is” in English can mean “represents”, but usually does not. The plain, the literal, reading of *touto esti* is “this is”.¹⁵

Scriptural Truths for Roman Catholics, having misapplied elementary Greek, then looks at confession, the sacrament of penance, and justification. The reader discovers that no man has been empowered by Christ to forgive sins: “Who can forgive sins, but only God?” (Mk 2:7). He also learns not to confess to a priest: “Repent. . . and pray to god” (Acts 8:22). Deprecated is the Church’s appeal to John 20:22-23: “Receive the Holy Spirit; when you

forgive men's sins, they are forgiven, when you hold them bound, they are held bound." Brewer makes the standard argument that this was not a grant of a power to forgive sins, but to preach repentance, even though that flies in the face of the plain words of the text and the understanding of all the early Fathers of the Church. When considering justification, he argues salvation by faith alone and quotes fourteen biblical verses to buttress his case, but conveniently makes no reference to James 2:24: "You see, then, that it takes deeds as well as faith if a man is to be justified. "This tract makes no effort, on this or any other topic, to present the Catholic side or to deal with the weaknesses in its own argument.

Then comes the juiciest part of the tract, a section labelled "Roman Catholic Inventions", a list of forty-four beliefs or customs supposedly borrowed from paganism or created *ex nihilo*. Each item includes an approximate date of first belief or use. The list was taken, without attribution, from the first chapter of Loraine Boettner's *Roman Catholicism*. Almost none of the forty-four items are mentioned in other tracts from *Mission to Catholics*. What the reader thus is left with, in most cases, is a short statement consisting of no more than eight or ten words—and, of course, an uneasy feeling. These "inventions" are given not to present the reader with a complete syllogism, but to leave him with suspicions. Pile up enough innuendos, and one has what appears to be a convincing case against the Church.

This list is partly reincarnated in another *Mission to Catholics* tract, *Can a Christian Remain a Roman Catholic?* The author, John Phillips, claims that "Rome did not arrive at its dogmatic positions hastily or lightly. She is the product of many centuries of gradual departure from the true faith of the Church found in the word of God." More than thirty of the other tract's "Catholic Inventions" are then reproduced. "This is Rome", says Phillips. "These are the dogmas we associate with Rome. They are un-scriptural. All of them are the very antithesis of New Testament doctrine."

One blind spot that afflicts all professional anti-Catholics is the difference between doctrines and practices. That Christ rose from the dead is a doctrine; that Catholics are to abstain from meat on Good Friday is a practice, a disciplinary measure only. There is nothing doctrinal about the latter: it is not a belief, but a custom, and it can be altered as circumstances warrant. It is one thing to allege that some of Christianity's original doctrines have been dropped and non-Christian doctrines adopted. That, if demonstrated, would

show the Catholic Church is defectible, that it is not really the institution founded by Christ. But to argue that the Catholic Church cannot be the one founded by him because, say, “priests began to assume distinctive robes in A.D. 500” is to rest one’s apologetics on a basic confusion. No one, not even a fundamentalist, can argue rationally that the Church today should appear, even in all outward respects, just like the Church of apostolic times. If fundamentalists were clear in their own minds about the distinction between doctrines and practices, they would not bother arguing about the latter, because they would realize the knife cuts both ways.

Even when it comes to purely doctrinal matters, they are confused. On the one hand they seem to think there could be no proper development of doctrines as Catholics understand the term, no deeper understanding of them as centuries pass. Frank Sheed noted that one cannot stop people from drawing true inferences from true doctrines.¹⁶ If “This is my body”, for instance, then certain things logically follow regarding the Eucharist. On the other hand, fundamentalists are not averse to their own brand of doctrinal development; they too believe things that are not found on the face of Scripture. There are peculiarly fundamentalist doctrines that find no warrant in Scripture and that should, by the fundamentalists’ own rationale, be thrown out. Such difficulties are never discussed in literature from organizations such as Mission to Catholics because they are not perceived to exist. Professional anti-Catholics take the fundamentalist position as a given, the Catholic position as a usurpation, and their chief concern is to undermine the latter, not to justify the former.

Chapter 4

Old-Time Religion, Old-Time Tactics

One might surmise a religious tract titled *From Voodooism and Roman Catholicism to the Living Saviour* would be written by George Bush, popularizer of voodoo economics. Not so. The author, Clarence Ismey, is a Haitian, a onetime Catholic and (simultaneously, he says) voodooist who was converted to fundamentalism through the persistence of an illiterate man who had memorized dozens of Bible verses and recited them, one after another, until Ismey's defenses were breached. It took only one day.

Ismey claims he was promptly ostracized by his family and moved to Port-Au-Prince, where he was befriended by other Protestants. He attended a fundamentalist seminary, where he decided he was called to minister to the hundred thousand Haitians living in New York City. There he works as an associate of the Conversion Center, one of the oldest anti-Catholic groups in the country.

The name of this organization is wonderfully neutral, giving no hint what people are supposed to convert from or to, but it does not take long to see that the sole purpose of the group is to transform Catholics into fundamentalists. This is clear from an examination of its price list. The three dozen tracts available for purchase have titles such as *The Confusion of the Popes*, *The Roman Catholic Bible Says*, *Roman Catholic Articles of Faith*, *Transubstantiation*, and *The Mass—Sacrifice or Sacrilege?* Books for sale include *Catholicism against Itself*, *You Can Lead Roman Catholics to Christ*, *Secrets of Romanism*, and *Letters to a Roman Catholic Priest*. Also on the list are perennial favorites such as *Fifty Years in the Church of Rome*, by Charles Chiniquy, whose nineteenth-century horror stories still sell; *The Two Babylons*, written in 1853 by Alexander Hislop, who claimed Catholicism arose from ancient Babylonian cults; and *Roman Catholicism*, by Loraine Boettner, godfather of the modern anti-Catholic movement.

The Conversion Center, which had its “international headquarters” (in fact, its only office) in Havertown, Pennsylvania, and is now located in Newtown

Square, was founded by the late Alex O. Dunlap, who, with four other onetime trustees, is said to be “at home with the Lord—Rev. 14:13”. The present head of the group is the Rev. Donald F. Maconaghie, who lists himself as acting director. A pithy description of the group is given on the masthead of each issue of its newsletter: “A fundamental Faith Mission, Home & Foreign, offering spiritual and temporal help to Roman Catholic priests, nuns, and ‘whosoever will’ ”, The ostensible targets of the Conversion Center’s ministrations are thus priests and religious, but most of the tracts and books end up being thrust into the hands of Catholic laymen.

On the whole, the Conversion Center seems to be a smaller operation than Mission to Catholics, but a reasonably influential one, since it makes some effort to concentrate its energies toward a subset of Catholics. Its principals must have some concern about continuity, though. Photographs of the annual meeting show a modest crowd in a small Baptist church, and the leaders of the organization, like a disproportionate number of people in the pews, are mainly elderly.

The Conversion Center’s newsletter, which appears irregularly and carries less copy than Mission to Catholics’ *Challenger*, offers some interesting viewpoints. The March 1984 issue, for instance, was devoted to the topic “Is Mary the ‘Mother of God’?” The author, as is usually the case, was Maconaghie. He starts this way: “After being practically beaten to death in the Republic of Ireland for preaching the Gospel,¹ I was made very sick in the hospital by being forced to listen to ‘prayers’ said by the nursing sister. Most of these prayers were to Mary, ‘the Mother of God’ ”.

Maconaghie says Mary cannot be the Mother of God because that would make her mother, Anne, the grandmother of God. “Likewise, James, the brother of our Lord, would be the brother of God. David would be the forefather of God.” The promoter of the notion of *Theotokos* (God-bearer) “was an unscrupulous bishop of Egypt, Cyril, who was promptly anathematized for his new and idolatrous doctrine by the most prominent bishop of his day, Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople”. At the Council of Ephesus, “Cyril ganged up on Nestorius, and by blackmail and bribery (fairly admitted in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*) the ‘Mother of God’ controversy was settled in favor of Cyril. Consequently Cyril has been pronounced a ‘saint’ and Nestorius a ‘heretic’.”

So where did this notion of *Theotokos* come from? asks Maconaghie. From Egypt, of course, where Isis, “the Egyptian madonna”, carried “her little ‘sun-

god', Horus, in her arms" and where "the worship of Seb, 'the father of the gods,' was supplanted by this 'mother-goddess' ". Get it? Isis was worshiped instead of Seb; Mary is worshiped instead of the Father.

(This issue of the newsletter ends, by the way, with a paragraph in praise of Bart Brewer, head of Mission to Catholics International, with whom Maconaghie "had the joy of visiting Mexico and sharing the Gospel with the people there". In fact, several of the Conversion Center's tracts have been reprinted by Mission to Catholics under its own name.)

There are interesting reports given by Maconaghie in the following issue. Under a large headline reading "CONVERSION CENTER LEADER DEBATES THEOLOGIAN IN VATICAN" is a short article, most of which concerns a 1963 visit by Maconaghie to Rome. Then he says, "A few weeks ago I again visited Rome. This time I was invited by a high member of the Vatican Hierarchy. I entered with an official pass, duly issued by the Vatican bureaucracy. There in the 'Holy' See I debated point by point the doctrines of our precious Lord for four solid hours with a Vatican theologian."

That's it. From the headline one might imagine Maconaghie squaring off against Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, but he gives no hint concerning the identities of the "high member of the Vatican Hierarchy" who invited him or of the "Vatican theologian" with whom he "debated". He does say later that he had a long discussion with an archbishop. Is this the man who invited him, or the man he debated with, or did he merely exchange the usual courtesies with a visiting American prelate? The impression given the fundamentalist reader, no doubt, is that Maconaghie was in Rome doing what Hus or Luther did, putting the Vatican know-nothings in their places.

The August / September 1986 issue of the Conversion Center's newsletter features a peculiar "Dear Friend" letter from Maconaghie. It begins this way:

Cardinal Newman came perhaps the nearest of anyone in explaining how the Roman Catholic Church has so completely betrayed the message of the Christian Gospel. I think he was endeavouring to be as charitable as possible when he attributed the great betrayal to actual possession of the Church of Rome by an evil spirit. In his book *[An Essay on] The Development of Christian Doctrine* (page 6) he says, "The spirit of Rome has risen again in its former place, and has evidenced its identity by its works. It has possessed the church there planted as an evil spirit might seize the demoniacs of primitive times, and makes her speak words which are not her own. In the corrupt Papal System we have the very cruelty, the craft and the ambition of the Roman Republic, its cruelty in its unsparing sacrifice of the happiness and virtue of individuals to a phantom of public expediency, inks forced celibacy within, and its persecutions without; its craft in its falsehoods, its deceitful deeds and lying wonders; and its grasping ambition in the very structure of its policy, in its assumption of universal dominion: but it still claims the sovereignty under pretense. The Roman Catholic Church I will not blame, but pity—she is in

thralldom.”

Maconaghie continues by saying of Newman,

He masterfully enumerates the perversions that have resulted from this demoniacal possession very concisely as follows: “She virtually substitutes an external ritual for moral obedience, penance for penitence, confession for sorrow, profession for faith, the lips for the heart.” Cardinal Newman was, of course, only one of many religious leaders who has warned us of this evil which has possessed the corrupt Papal System. Among them are the founders of the Methodist, the Presbyterian and the Lutheran churches [that is, John Wesley, John Knox, and Martin Luther].

The impression given by Maconaghie is that Newman, when a prince of the Church, condemned the “papal system”—and this in his most important book.

There are several things wrong with these quotations. For one thing, without letting the reader in on it, Maconaghie has dropped some phrases, added one word, and changed another word.² The meaning of the passages is changed slightly from what Newman actually wrote. His words are made to seem harsher than they were. This sleight of hand can be overlooked because it is minor compared to the real problem.

The real problem is that these words from Newman, which appear at the beginning of his book in what he labels an “Advertisement”, do *not* give his views at the time of writing. Quite the contrary. They are quotations from earlier writings, and he here specifically *retracts* them. He is saying these judgments, made when he was a Protestant, were *wrong*. Yet Maconaghie would have us think these are “Cardinal” Newman’s present opinions, the notions with which he went to his grave.

The passages being retracted were written in 1834, when Newman was thirty-three. As a young Anglican minister, he had been anti-Roman, as most in his circle were. But he learned much over the next eleven years, and when he wrote the “Advertisement”, which is dated October 6, 1845, he was convinced his earlier views were incorrect, that he had been operating from mere prejudice. In fact, just after Newman completed *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, he became a Catholic. He was, at his conversion, a layman—not a priest, certainly not a cardinal. He was not raised to the cardinalate until 1879, thirty-four years later.

So Maconaghie is triply wrong—wrong in the quotations, which he adulterates; wrong in their import, which he misrepresents; wrong in

Newman's status, which he misunderstands.

This is a good example of the way fundamentalist opponents of the Church bend facts to the snapping point. Little printed by professional anti-Catholics—those who make their living by attacking “Romanism”—can be taken at face value. The reader cannot assume blithely all is on the up and up. Nearly every paragraph requires an investigation, but who has time for that? Worse, how many suspect an investigation is even needed? Not many, of course, which is why writings like Maconaghie's do so much harm and, for the most part, go unchallenged.

A curious thing about the Conversion Center's newsletters is that most of the photographs of things Catholic are at least forty years old. Shown have been a priest giving an anointing in a hospital room where the patient's bed might have been used for those wounded at Verdun; another priest, in a grainy photo, celebrating a Tridentine Mass; Communion being given to servicemen wearing World War II uniforms; and a seminarian using a typewriter that Barry Fitzgerald might have brought to the set of his movies with Bing Crosby.³

The picture of the seminarian appears with the title “Seminarians Need Help!” The help needed, of course, is not the kind the Vatican might desire. Maconaghie prints portions of a letter from a young man studying—God knows why—for the priesthood: “Within a year I can be ordained a priest . . . but my convictions are against the Catholic church. In fact, I've come to know of the falsehood of the R.C. church. There are a lot of practices and beliefs in the R.C. church which are irrational, absurd, and unbiblical. To mention a few: infallibility of the pope, immaculate conception, Marian devotion and devotion to saints. . . . I feel that the Spirit of the Lord is leading me out of the Catholic church. I have been reading your esteemed publication and am convinced that the Baptist church is the true church of the Lord. Can I too become a Baptist pastor?”

In a sidebar is another letter. The name of the writer and his seminary have been deleted. He says, “I have been praying for the success of all your works for the propagation of the Gospel message. I feel that the Lord is calling me too, to join you and render humble service.” He then asks Maconaghie's help in getting admitted to a fundamentalist school of theology.

These letters sound so bizarre that they might be no more authentic than the Hitler diaries, but they are probably legitimate. Considering the state of seminaries today, there is no reason why incipient fundamentalists cannot be

found in them alongside incipient agnostics, though it does seem odd that young men convinced the Catholic Church is the Whore of Babylon, as the Conversion Center regularly states, would not leap from the fire at the first opportunity.

The newsletters are not the only bizarre things distributed by the Conversion Center. Some of its tracts are a bit odd. Consider one called *10 Reasons Why I Am Not a Roman Catholic*. The first point, given in full, reads like this:

1. THE PAPACY IS A HOAX. Peter never claimed to be pope. He was never in Rome. He knew that Jesus Christ, not himself, was the “Rock”. It is written, “Call no one on earth your Father; for one is your Father, who is in heaven” Mt 23:9.

How does one answer this? The effort required to respond to these four sentences is so disproportionate to their length—it would take several pages to give a complete answer⁴—that even people who know why these remarks are wrong would be tempted to find refuge in T. S. Eliot’s line: “What have we to do but stand with empty hands and palms turned upwards?”⁵ The temptation is to do nothing, to make no response, but that lets anti-Catholics win the skirmish by default. It must be admitted they enjoy a certain tactical (if short-term) advantage in that they can get away with presenting bare-bones claims such as these; they wear out Catholicism’s defenders by inundating them with short remarks that demand long explanations.

Other points in this tract are similarly terse. The next two are:

2. MARYOLATRY [*sic*] IS A HOAX. It is written of Christ, “Neither is there salvation in any other name. For there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” Acts 4:12.

3. PURGATORY IS A HOAX. It is a money-making scheme. It is written, “The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses us from All sin” 1 John 1:7.

The penultimate point reveals that the tract is outdated:

9. I AM AN AMERICAN CITIZEN, and refuse to be the subject of a deluded Italian Prince. It is written, “No man can serve two masters” Mt 6:24.

The Conversion Center also distributes a card titled *10 Reasons Why I Drink*. It is the kind of thing one pulls out of a shirt pocket and offers along with a business card. The first of the ten reasons is, “I love to vomit.” The last reads, “It’s my way of obeying God, Who says, ‘Wine is a mocker, strong drink is

raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.’ Proverbs 20:1.” The Conversion Center, like most fundamentalist groups, opposes the drinking of wine, no exceptions. No search of anti-Catholic writings, no matter how thorough, will reveal any discussion of the use of wine versus the misuse of wine. The drink Hilaire Belloc praised in his most famous poem is off limits for fundamentalists.⁶ This stricture puts even the casual reader of the Bible in an awkward spot, since Christ first displayed his miraculous powers by turning water into wine at Cana, and he used wine at the Last Supper. Surely he did not disapprove of its use, as distinguished from its abuse. Some fundamentalists try to explain away such awkwardness (by saying, for example, that the drink at the Last Supper was unfermented grape juice, not wine), but most simply ignore the problem. Far better to turn to more profitable endeavors—such as American history.

The Conversion Center publishes a small leaflet bearing Abraham Lincoln’s likeness. It is called *Lincoln’s Warning*. Credit is given to Charles Chiniquy’s *Fifty Years in the Church of Rome*. The reader learns that Lincoln said: “The priests, the nuns and monks, who daily land on our shores under the pretext of teaching their religion. . . are nothing else than emissaries of the pope, to undermine our institutions . . . and prepare a reign of anarchy here as they have done in Ireland, in Spain, and wherever there are people that want to be free.”

Those who do not realize it was the Catholics of Ireland, rather than the English colonizers of Ireland, who initiated the trouble there can learn the sixteenth president thought “papists” a positive danger to the Republic: “Till lately I was in favor of the unlimited liberty of conscience, as our Constitution gives it to the Roman Catholics. But now it seems to me that, sooner or later, the people will be forced to put an amendment to that clause toward the papists. Is it right to give the privilege of citizenship to men who are the sworn and public enemies (No. 1) of our Constitution, our laws, our liberties, and our lives?. . . I am for liberty of conscience in its noblest, broadest, highest sense. But I cannot give liberty of conscience to the pope or his followers, the papists, so long as they tell me that their conscience orders them to burn my wife, strangle my children, and cut my throat when they find* the opportunity.” The asterisk refers to a footnote, which says “Lincoln was finally assassinated April 14, 1865, by Roman Catholics.”

If an experiment in historiography is in order, one might ask the people at the Conversion Center, who apparently believe Lincoln wrote these lines, just

where in his collected letters, speeches, or official documents they can be found. Lincoln was not one to make idle charges; if Catholics told him they were bound in conscience to burn his wife, strangle his children, and cut his throat, he no doubt left posterity details of just who informed him of this curious obligation. Searching his writings might be fruitless, though; the clue is that the expression “public enemy” came into vogue only in the 1920s.

Chapter 5

Bringing Catholics to Real Christianity

Although Bill Jackson's ministry, Christians Evangelizing Catholics, is small, he is in considerable demand on the fundamentalist lecture circuit, and the reports of his tours in his newsletter show that he puts on plenty of miles. He may speak in several states in a month, and in 1985 he even took his message to Ireland, where he spent seventeen years as a minister, and to England. The newsletter is sent from his San Jose, California, home to about eight hundred names, but the number belies Jackson's influence. Many of the names are of ministers or of leaders of similar organizations. Through one name might come a talk to hundreds of people, or a single acquaintance might arrange for Jackson to speak at several churches, multiplying his effectiveness.

Jackson shares with his readers news about his children and their spiritual maturation, asking, in one issue,¹ for prayers for his son Dave, who "has come back to the Lord" and who thinks "the Lord has other things He wants him to do with his life" than lay carpets, which Dave finds "physically difficult to continue". The other children are more established. Bill, Jr., and his wife live in New York City; Colleen and her family are in the San Joaquin Valley; and Mark is in Chicago, studying at the Moody Bible Institute, perhaps to join his father in convincing Catholics to leave the Church while there is still time. Also studying, readers are told, are "four Roman Catholics who have been saved through taking the 'Treasures in Your Catholic Bible' study course. . . .I met one of them recently, and he needs your prayer for his Roman Catholic wife." The study course is printed by Tabernacle Pres of Louisville, Kentucky, the firm that prints Jackson's tracts (twelve so far, soon more) and booklets (four), which he distributes "on a free will offering basis".

In his newsletter Jackson does more than recount his family's version of the Pilgrim's Progress, of course. He gives practical examples of what can be done by one person to bring Catholics into real Christianity. He called one article "Use Your Local Priest".² In it he explained that he at one time

worked with a telephone ministry organized by a Baptist church in San Francisco. “We used a business directory and made random calls to certain areas.” One night he called St. Mary’s Catholic Church. A layman answered, and Jackson asked him about “the assurance of salvation”. The layman, stumped, went for the priest. “Needless to say,” said Jackson, “the priest didn’t know anything more about salvation than the layman had, but, during our conversation, he specifically told me he did not have assurance of salvation. From that time on, whenever I telephoned a person who identified themselves *[sic]* as a Roman Catholic, I could say, ‘I talked to one of your priests the other day. He said he wasn’t sure of going to heaven, but my Bible says that we can know.’ I would then quote 1 John 5:13 and found this a very good way to initiate a gospel presentation.”

This can, indeed, be a good means to effect conversions. Another way is to march right up and accost a priest. “You might visit the priest and find him unwilling to talk, as a Baptist pastor and I experienced recently. When we knocked on his door and introduced ourselves, he said, ‘I am a busy person. No one gets to see me without an appointment. This is one of the rudest things I ever saw, your just coming here and expecting to talk to me.’ (These are not his verbatim words, but the jest *[sic]* of what he said to us.) If you run across this, excuse yourself politely and then call to make an appointment with him.”

Appointments can be revelatory; good use can be made of priestly ignorance thus exposed. “Sometimes the very lack of positive doctrinal standing by a priest can be used in evangelism. We often quote the priest we met last year in Dayton, who was very difficult to corner, but who finally joined a conversation we were having with a Catholic lady theologian. We asked him if the Bible was the word of God, if he was sure of salvation, if the Mass was a sacrifice—and all he could do was to uneasily shift from one foot to another and say, ‘I don’t know.’ ” Is it any wonder, with examples like these, that Jackson writes that “it has been said that an educated Catholic must cut off his head and leave it outside when he goes to church?” An irresolute priest invites precisely this kind of abuse.

Jackson calls himself not prolife but pro-eternal life. One of his tracts³ advises fundamentalist prolife workers to “realize your responsibility to the child you saved from abortion” by converting the parents to fundamentalism. “The greatest thing that can happen is for the mother to be evangelized and saved. Recently I met a young lady who, when unsaved, was planning an

abortion. She was contacted by Christians who persuaded her to keep her baby and who led her to the Lord. Later, the father was also saved. So instead of three lives—one wrecked, one murdered, and one unsaved—we have a Christian family with a positive testimony of God’s grace.” It is hard to fault Jackson’s logic here; he has, in this regard, a better appreciation of what is needed than do many Catholic proliferers who are satisfied just to halt abortions. However great a triumph it is to have one more life spared, stopping there is not enough. To do so is to ignore the deeper causes of the abortion mentality, which is necessarily a secularist and irreligious mentality.

Catholics, who for so many years carried on the prolife battle seemingly alone, now sometimes express annoyance that fundamentalists, who have more recently become active in the movement, seem unable to restrain themselves from evangelizing during strategy sessions. It is one thing, these Catholics think, to save babies, quite another to seek conversions among movement members. They would not be so annoyed if they perceived that the fundamentalists are perhaps being more consistent than they are and perhaps have a keener appreciation that abortion is as much a problem of the soul as a problem of the scalpel.

Aside from the newsletter, which preaches to the converted, Jackson produces tracts. One is titled *Is Roman Catholicism a Cult?* When Catholics think of cults, they think of the Hare Krishnas, the Moonies, the Scientologists. They find it hard to imagine that some Protestants think of the Catholic religion as a cult. But among fundamentalists, this is taken for granted and is a matter of keen concern. “Very likely”, Jackson writes, “this is the most often asked question when I minister regarding Roman Catholic evangelism.” Catholics are naturally offended at being called cultists, at least in the sense the fundamentalists mean to use the term.⁴

As in so many matters, fundamentalists and Catholics are at loggerheads because they define terms differently. Jackson explains fundamentalists’ peculiar definition: “The word, as generally used by the Lord’s people today, means some kind of false religion, especially one that denies the basic truths of Christianity. We may get a consensus of opinion [among fundamentalists] that would state a cult is a religion that does not believe in basic Christian truths and is always characterized by a denial of the uniqueness of biblical revelation and a salvation at least partially dependent on the works and merits of its adherents.” In other words, a cult is any religion that is not fundamentalism.

Granted, this is not a particularly helpful definition, but there is some sense to it. For the man who believes in fundamentalism, any other religion is necessarily erroneous. The Catholic Church adopts a similar perspective in acknowledging that every religion other than the Catholic is to some extent erroneous. But the Church differs in approach from fundamentalism in that it always (and not just since Vatican II) has been willing to acknowledge that other religions contain greater or lesser degrees of truth, depending on how much they mirror Catholicism. Eastern Orthodoxy is truer than, say, high-church Anglicanism, which is truer than Presbyterianism, which is truer than Unitarianism. Few fundamentalists are willing to be so generous. One is either a fundamentalist or damned, and, if damned, it does not much matter how close to heaven's gate one might be, because outside is still outside.

Jackson lumps the Catholic Church with the cults because "Roman Catholics have added to the Bible. They have no means of solid interpretation. Their present attitude toward its inerrancy is thoroughly liberal, and they have through the years been vocal in condemning God's Word. The Bible was placed on the Index of Forbidden Books—they will now tell you that was only because of erroneous Protestant translations—but it was first placed there in 1229, over 100 years before Wycliffe's first translation,"

These sentences contain some of the chief fundamentalist objections to Catholicism. Note that Jackson says the Church provides no means for "solid interpretation". At first this seems laughable coming from someone who dismisses any authority other than himself in interpreting Scripture. The individual is the least solid of all interpreters, which is precisely why Protestantism has been fissiparous. Jackson is more on target in saying the Catholic attitude toward inerrancy is "thoroughly liberal". This is his perception of the disarray in Catholic exegesis over the last twenty years. To him it appears the historico-critical method and its "assured results" are fully indicative of the official Catholic position on the Bible. Then he claims the Church had been "vocal in condemning God's Word" by placing the Bible on the Index of Forbidden Books in 1229. Of course, the Index was first printed in 1543, more than three centuries after that, but no matter. The gaffe is not entirely Jackson's fault. Here he was relying on Bart Brewer of Mission to Catholics, who made the same claim in one of his tracts, and Brewer in turn got the date from Loraine Boettner's *Roman Catholicism*, which gives no source for it.

Note the last phrase, “over 100 years before Wycliffe’s first translation”. This is not a gratuitous line, no idle reference or mere name dropping. Wycliffe is understood by most fundamentalists to have been the first to put Scripture into English.⁵ For them, the culmination of what Wycliffe is understood to have started is the King James Version. One will find in the case of many fundamentalists a reverence for that translation that approaches idolatry. There have been many fallings-out among fundamentalists because some will use only the King James Version, claiming that no other version is accurate, while others will adopt newer translations.

Jackson’s tract has other complaints about the Catholic Church. While attempting to suppress the Bible, the Church foists on Christianity things of her own fashioning, such as the doctrine of the Assumption. “The addition of blasphemous Tradition and changeable Papal teaching is as bad as looking for inspiration in [Mary Baker Eddy’s] *Science and Health*. . . or *The Book of Mormon*. It is difficult to come up with any modern definition of what is a cult and include Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, and a host of others and omit the largest false religious system of all—Roman Catholicism.” Jackson says that “only as we see the system for what it really is can we fulfill our evangelistic responsibilities to the millions of souls lost therein—blinded by Satan and believing a lie. May we clearly define the system and truly love the people, and may God use us in Roman Catholic evangelism.”

Is Roman Catholicism a Cult? is a tract that appeals mainly to committed fundamentalists. It will sway few Catholics because its title is alienating, and its few paragraphs try to cover so many points that none is covered well. More effective, no doubt, has been Jackson’s tract *Charismatic Catholics*. It has been printed by Tabernacle Press for Jackson and reprinted by the Conversion Center and Mission to Catholics; it is a good example of the way anti-Catholics cooperate.

Catholic charismatics are a prime target for fundamentalists because they already have a keen appreciation of the Bible. They actually read it, which many “mainline” Catholics do not; non-charismatics are often immune to appeals to the Bible because they know little about it. Those familiar with Scripture, on the other hand, sometimes find themselves unable to counter arguments posed by fundamentalists, since their study of apologetics and theology has not kept pace with their study of the Bible. They accept the premise that any Christian truth should be demonstrable by appealing to the plain words of the text, and they are dismayed to discover there is no clear

mention of auricular confession, infant baptism, or the Immaculate Conception in any book from Matthew to Revelation. Thus many charismatics (non-Catholic as well as Catholic, of course) fall prey to fundamentalist blandishments, each blandishment coming in the form of a quotation from Scripture.

“A person who claims to be a born again Christian and remains in the Roman Catholic Church is ignorant, disobedient, or hypocritical”, concludes Jackson. One cannot stay in the Catholic Church and evangelize from within. God “told his people to come out of paganism and idolatry” (2 Cor 6:14-18). The answer? “It is essential that every true born again child of God separate from the church of Rome or any false system of religion and unite with a Bible believing fundamental Christian local church so that they [*sic*] can serve God in true obedience.” To the person impressed by concatenated biblical quotations (examples of which will be omitted here), this kind of argument is persuasive. Charismatics see that syllogisms of a sort can be constructed from Bible passages, and they surprisingly often act on the syllogisms—as do thousands of Catholics who disdain the charismatic approach to religion but who, like some of their charismatic brethren, have no ready intellectual defenses against fundamentalism. Most Catholics, of whatever stripe, are vulnerable to fundamentalist attacks.

Just as some of Jackson’s tracts are aimed at a wide audience, others are aimed at a select few. One is aimed directly at seminarians. It is entitled *Think: Should You Become a Priest?* This pocket-sized leaflet first quotes Pius XII and John XXIII about the paucity of vocations. The reader is told that “St. Alphonsus Liguori wrote eloquently about the duties and dignity of a priest.” Then focus shifts. To answer the question on the cover, “we must go to the Word of God and to your innermost heart”. This passage is given: “And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins, but this man (Jesus), after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God. . . . For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified” (Heb 10:11-12, 14). A sacrificing priesthood is therefore a superfluity, says Jackson. The Bible clearly says so. “Ceasing to trust a human priesthood for propitiation and absolution, and placing our trust in Jesus’ perfect work—this is salvation!” He makes no attempt, of course, to consider how the Catholic Church understands the verses he quotes. One problem with fundamentalists is that they think the points they bring up have never been considered by the

Church. It does not occur to them to find out what informed Catholics understand by a particular passage of Scripture. They find it incomprehensible that someone could have a conclusion that differs from theirs. In this regard their minds lack subtlety.

They generally admit that Catholics hold their beliefs in good faith, but they think they hold them in unalloyed ignorance, having no rational grounds for them at all. When mention is made of someone believing in “blind faith”, most people immediately think of stereotypic Bible thumpers, but Bible thumpers, as often as not, think immediately of Catholics. They think Catholics believe what they do either out of habit, having been brought up that way, or because they are under the influence of rapacious clerics, who keep them in intellectual bondage the better to mulct them. The Catholic religion is the opium of the people, say fundamentalists.

Chapter 6

I Have Literally Bent Over Backwards

A generation ago the only one in the family who was well-known was Jerry Lee Lewis, who, with hits such as “Great Balls of Fire”, was at the top of the rock-and-roll charts. Jerry Lee long since disappeared from celebrity status, but the family still has someone at the top of the charts—the television rating charts, this time. It is Jerry Lee’s cousin, Jimmy Lee, better known as evangelist Jimmy Lee Swaggart,

“The Jimmy Swaggart Telecast” is seen by as many as three million Americans weekly. The ministry’s monthly magazine, *The Evangelist*, has about a million readers. Jimmy Swaggart is now as popular a television evangelist as Robert Schuller (of “Crystal Cathedral” fame), Oral Roberts, or Jerry Falwell, each of whom had a head start on him. Of the many television evangelists, great and small, it is Swaggart who is known for forthright anti-Catholicism.

An Assemblies of God minister, Swaggart bases his operations in Baton Rouge, Louisiana (which is “67% Catholic” and, he explains, “a little more superstitious, a little ‘more Catholic’ ” than the rest of the country).¹ There he has a \$30 million World Ministry Center, which includes the Jimmy Swaggart Bible College. It is in Baton Rouge that he tapes his programs and plans his crusades.²

For most of his career Swaggart has been indistinguishable from other television preachers. Only in the last few years has his anti-Catholicism become painfully noticeable, no doubt because anti-Catholicism has become fashionable. Like other trends, it has come out of the closet.

At first the objectionable comments were given over the air as infrequent *obiter dicta*. Listeners were told, for instance, that the Catholic Church killed fifty to sixty million people during the Dark Ages because they would not convert. “They cut your head off. They shot you through with an arrow. They tortured you to death”, Swaggart explained on one of his broadcasts. He said the Church had a law passed in 416 that made membership mandatory under

penalty of death, and he noted that “priests are just leading people to hell”. He decried “liturgical religious monstrosities” such as the Mass. Despite such remarks, much of his audience consists of Catholics.³

Things came to a head when Swaggart published “A Letter to My Catholic Friends” in the January 1983 issue of *The Evangelist*. The resulting brouhaha eventually died down, but Swaggart decided to stir things up once more after discovering that he had not lost all his support from Catholics and that many non-Catholics were pleased at what he had said. In July 1985 *The Evangelist* carried “the first in a series of articles [by Swaggart] which will, I hope, lay a scriptural foundation illuminating ‘the faith which was once delivered unto the saints’ (Jude 3)—and this same faith as interpreted within Roman Catholic teaching”. This series was in part a revision of the “Letter”, which had run to about a dozen pages, and the series was, in turn, revised into a book, *Catholicism & Christianity*.⁴

The Evangelist is a curious magazine, clearly centered about one man. Major articles are written by Swaggart or his wife, Frances. There are contributions by others, but they are usually secondary. In some issues, more pages are by the Swaggarts than by all other contributors combined. Consider the issue that inaugurated Swaggart’s series on Catholicism. The cover story was on “The New Evangelists: What Do They Preach?” In seven pages promoters of secular humanism were examined, including Bob Guccione, Hugh Hefner, Larry Flynt, Norman Lear, and Phil Donahue. The author: Jimmy Swaggart. Next was a question-and-answer column titled “Brother Swaggart, Here’s My Question”. (“Question: Is the Bible filled with inconsistencies, contradictions, and errors as some claim?”)

Next were some non-Swaggart pieces: one on prophecy, by Willard Cantelon, who “has met with world leaders in private and spent hours in personal interviews”; one on the afterlife, by David Wilkerson, author of *The Cross and the Switchblade*; an obituary; and two pages of news shorts. Then came the “Letters from Our Viewers” column, hosted by Frances Swaggart, and this was followed by a report on the Jimmy Swaggart Ministries’ charitable distributions overseas.

Jimmy Swaggart returned as author with “Christianity and Catholicism”; the accompanying photograph was of a gold crucifix at the end of a rosary. There followed a full-page advertisement encouraging readers to attend a Swaggart crusade; two pages on faith by C. M. Ward, a radio preacher for the Assemblies of God; and then another piece by Swaggart, “Startling Incidents

and Amazing Answers to Prayer”. (It is here one learned that “one of the nation’s major newspapers [unidentified] said just the other day, ‘Any time you see a Catholic church in Louisiana, you will also see a bar very close by.’ I think they were intending it as a compliment—which it certainly is not—but, basically, it is the truth.”)

Then came a request that the Jimmy Swaggart Ministries be mentioned in one’s will; a column on dating by the youth minister at the World Ministry Center; a first-person account of conversion by a Crow Indian; a two-page pitch for money by Frances Swaggart, who penned across the page, “Please let me bear [sic] my heart to you”; an advertisement for the *Jimmy Swaggart Giant Print Commentary Bible* (“The Best \$60 Investment You Could Ever Make!”); an open letter by Swaggart to the Assemblies of God on the eve of that denomination’s general council; and “From Me to You”, in which Swaggart prefaced his comments with “I believe God has spoken these words to me”. The last few pages of the magazine hawked cassettes, records, and booklets by Swaggart, the latter having titles such as *The Council of Jerusalem*, *Questions and Answers: Volume 4*, and *The Unpardonable Sin*.

No doubt about it: this is not a small operation. It is so large now, so successful, so moneyed, that Swaggart can chance alienating his Catholic viewers and readers by moving from the hard sell to the harder sell. In “A Letter to My Catholic Friends”, he put it this way: “I try never to pull any punches. I believe that if we are to truly serve our Lord, we must face all issues honestly and up-front. There have been times when I’ve made Catholics angry through statements I’ve made, but what I’ve said has always been said in love. Because I love them, I will tell them the truth.” Swaggart accepts that many Catholics have been born again; he thinks they fail to act on their rebirth if they remain in the Catholic Church. His “Letter” was intended to give them reasons to leave.

The “Letter” begins by noting that the Church “basically teaches that only those who are *in* the Catholic church will be saved”. This is of course true, although not in the Feeneyite sense. Fundamentalists do not object to such a claim—which amounts to saying that the Catholic Church is the only one founded by Christ—merely because it is some religion other than theirs that claims to be the Way. Their objection is that Catholics say an institution, a “system”, is necessary for salvation, “Bible Christians” often use the term religion in a derogatory, not in a theological or sociological, sense. Their meaning is not the dictionary’s, which defines religion as the recognition on

the part of man of a superhuman, controlling power deserving obedience and worship. By religion fundamentalists mean a complex, rule-laden, man-made, even casuistical scheme for effecting salvation on one's own.

Swaggart continues by saying that "Catholic tradition [which he nowhere defines] suggests that . . . Mary—not Jesus—is the mediator between God and man. There is little clear-cut distinction between God the Father and Jesus in the mind of most Catholics; hence, their tendency to think of *either* the Father or the Son as 'the Christ'." Catholics are thus Modalists—or perhaps Patri-passians who think the Father suffered on the Cross.

The reader learns, for instance, that "It was not long ago that the Catholic church *burned people at the stake*—by the tens of thousands—for *reading the Bible*! Only a generation ago Catholics were *forbidden* to read the Bible, the position being that if there were anything important in there the priest would tell the common people about it." The emphasis is Swaggart's, as is the notion that priests could not tell their parishioners much about the Bible because they read only a truncated version of it known as the breviary. "The Catholic church's doctrines are made up basically of legendary, mythical, apocryphal, human traditions—rather than being based on the Word of God." In fact, Catholicism is "a *false religion*. It is not a Christian religion, and it is *emphatically* not the 'church of Christ on earth' as it claims to be."

From generalities to specifics. The next topic is the papacy. Swaggart makes the same argument other fundamentalists make. He looks to the Greek text of Matthew 16:18-19 and argues that since Peter and the rock are referred to by two slightly different Greek words, the rock cannot be Peter but must be Christ. He makes no reference to the gender of Greek nouns or to the Aramaic language, which Christ spoke, which uses the word *kepha* in each place, so the passage reads: "Thou art *Kepha*, and upon this *kepha* I will build my church", just as in modern French the phrasing would be: "Thou art *Pierre*, and upon this *pierre* I will build my church." Reference to the Greek text is regularly made by fundamentalists when arguing with Catholics; it will be considered in a later chapter. For now it is enough to note this is an argument every Catholic needs to master, because every Catholic will find himself facing fundamentalists who try to impress him with their superficial, and largely mistaken, knowledge of Greek.⁵

After explaining that the power of the keys was nothing more than the power, or "right", to be the first to preach the Resurrection on Pentecost, not the wider power believed by Catholics to be held by the papacy, Swaggart

notes that “Peter would have been ineligible to be a Pope as he was married”. Surprisingly enough—or perhaps not so surprisingly, considering their lack of familiarity with the Bible—many Catholics are upset by this revelation. They think it is a telling point against the legitimacy of the papacy, since they have never heard that Popes or bishops or priests might at one time have been permitted to be married, just as few of them know that even today priests in the Eastern rites may be married. Swaggart himself might be disappointed to learn that a good number of early Popes, not just Peter, were not celibate. He might be especially disappointed to learn that this has always been acknowledged by Catholic historians and that no Catholic apologist has ever thought the fact argued against the existence of the papacy, for the very good reason that clerical celibacy, at whatever level, is a discipline, not a doctrine.

If Swaggart’s argument regarding Peter’s marital status does not clinch the matter, the next point does. He says “there isn’t a shred of literary, historical, archaeological, or scriptural evidence that Peter went to Rome or was ever in Rome. The Bible makes no mention of Peter being in Rome, and Paul, in his letter *from* Rome, never mentioned Peter being there. . . . There isn’t one word in secular history supporting the Catholic contention that Peter lived in Rome.” Swaggart is not just wrong here, but ignorant.

If it is archaeological evidence he wants, he can turn to John Evangelist Walsh’s *The Bones of St. Peter*,⁶ which recounts in detail the excavations under the high altar of St. Peter’s Basilica. If he wants literary or historical proof, he can turn to a reference work such as William A. Jurgens’ *The Faith of the Early Fathers*,⁷ which quotes sixteen passages from early Christian writers attesting to Peter’s being in Rome and dying there. In fact, we have more sources citing Peter’s presence in Rome than we have affirming Caesar’s crossing of the Rubicon.

Apparently Swaggart has never read the Fathers of the Church or any historian such as Eusebius, and there is scant evidence of any familiarity with archaeology or ancient literature. He knows little about the “literary, historical, or archaeological evidence” in the matter. The only evidence he has is the fourth on his list, scriptural evidence, and that is the only evidence most fundamentalists will consider in a matter such as this, even when the Bible is incompetent to decide the issue.

Fundamentalists’ reverence for the word of God is often so extreme that it becomes distorted, and they think the Bible should be the last word on any matter occurring between the start of Christ’s public ministry and the close of

the first century. It does not occur to them that other works may shed light on happenings of the period. What is more, they do not perceive that we can gain considerable insight regarding the proper interpretation of the Bible if we discover how the earliest Christians understood it.

Swaggart ends his discourse on the nonexistence of the papacy by saying, “Catholic tradition says that Peter was the first Pope. Who, then, was the second one?” Granted, one will not find the second Pope named as such in the Bible, but his name is listed in any encyclopedia. He was Linus, as a few moments’ research would have shown Swaggart, who made no effort to look at even plainly secular sources (forget Catholic sources) in developing his critique of Catholicism. His main source was, as it is for most anti-Catholic fundamentalists, Loraine Boettner’s *Roman Catholicism*.

From the papacy Swaggart moves on to the standard objection that the Church violates 1 Timothy 4:1-3 because priestly celibacy amounts to the “forbidding to marry” that Paul complains about, and from there he goes to Matthew 23:9 (“call no man on earth your father”) to demonstrate that the priesthood does not really exist because priests are called “Father”. Then it is to the Mass, where the reader is told that “it is *barbaric* to even insinuate that He has to be crucified again and again”. Of course, it is Swaggart who does the insinuating, since no Catholic thinks Christ dies anew at each Mass.

In peroration, it is back to Mary, who turns out to have had other children since Jesus was called her “first-born” (Mt 1:25)—Swaggart being wholly ignorant of the meaning of the term under the Mosaic law—and whose own mother cannot have been named Anne since “there is no hint, either in secular history or the Bible” of such a person, an example of Swaggart’s unfamiliarity with the apocryphal gospels.

Swaggart’s end is in his beginning, “As I close I want to say, as I’ve said previously in this article, that the Catholic organization is not a Christian organization. Its claims are false; it is a false religion. It is not the Christian plan of salvation, nor the Christian way. Whosoever follows its errant doctrines will be deceived and end up eternally lost.” He reassures the annoyed by saying that “every statement in this article is *fact* based on Scripture and historical record. It is not the ranting of someone blindly opposed to something as a matter of *opinion*.” And he really believes that. As uninformed and misinformed as Swaggart is, he is no Jack Chick or Tony Alamo. He does not try to deceive. He thinks he is giving the whole story, and his facts, such as they are, are taken mainly from sources he trusts.

Encouraged by the response to his articles in *The Evangelist*, Swaggart published in 1986 *Catholicism & Christianity*, an attractively bound hardback described on the dust jacket as a “powerful new book [that] examines each of the basic tenets of Catholicism and compares them against the standards and precepts of the Word of God”. In fact, it is not as complete as Loraine Boettner’s *Roman Catholicism* (it has half as many pages and a third as much text). This is not to say that Boettner’s book is complete in the sense of being scholarly or of taking into account Catholic rejoinders to his claims, but Boettner considers more topics, and always at greater length, than does Swaggart. No, *Catholicism & Christianity* will not replace *Roman Catholicism* as the main handbook for professional anti-Catholics, but it may reach more folks in the pews and have a greater effect in the long run.

Swaggart’s book recapitulates his magazine series; indeed, much of it is lifted word for word from *The Evangelist*. Since the book had, in a way, a trial run, the ubiquity of its blunders, non sequiturs, and contradictions is surprising. If criticisms of the magazine series were proffered, whether by Catholics or fundamentalists, they apparently were not incorporated into the manuscript of the book.

Start with a modest error. On the dust jacket and in the introduction,⁸ Swaggart says there are “over 600 million Roman Catholics” in the world. But in his concluding chapter he says “there are nearly 800 million nominal Catholics in the world”.⁹ Feeling charitable, one might say this is just an example of poor proofreading, but the next error cannot be.

In referring to the Assumption, Swaggart says: “Oddly enough, this mystical belief had been a peripheral precept [*sic*] within the Catholic church since the Middle Ages, but was only given official certification in 1950.”¹⁰ In other words, the doctrine had been believed, even if not officially defined, for maybe eight hundred years. Elsewhere he refers to “Mary being *suddenly* taken bodily into heaven. (We say ‘suddenly’ because no one knew about Mary’s physical ‘translation’ before it was unexpectedly announced by the Vatican in 1950.)”¹¹

Swaggart asserts that transubstantiation “is, without question, one of the most absurd doctrines ever imposed on a trusting public”,¹² though he does not venture to say how such an absurdity can be believed by millions of people who, demonstrably, are neither fools nor knaves. He repeats the common notion that the doctrine “was first formulated by Paschasius Radbertus, Abbot of Corbey, at the beginning of the ninth century”.¹³ His

confusion about the Eucharist is exemplified by his belief that the chief eucharistic feast is “Holy Thursday, or the Feast of Corpus Christi”.¹⁴

Discussing the duty to confess at least once annually, which only applies to those in mortal sin, Swaggart claims that “even though a person had not sinned during the year, he would still be consigned to eternal hellfire—simply because he had not ‘reported in’ to the priest during the year.”¹⁵ He asks, “How many political figures, public servants, judges, and men of high and important positions are held in bondage because of intimate secrets revealed to their priests? The most personal facts of every Catholic family, of every Catholic heart (which should be known only to God) are known by priests in their most intimate details.”¹⁶

Swaggart thinks the title “pope” means “universal bishop”, that “inquisition” translates as “torture”, that an indulgence is “a permit for indulging in sin”, that Paul said bishops had to be married (did they cease being bishops when they became widowers?), that the Rosary was “copied from the Hindus and Muhammadans [*sic*]”, that “by tradition was meant human opinions”, that the Bible was placed on the Index of Forbidden Books in 1229 (the Index was instituted in 1543, and no authentic Bible was ever put on it). These are just a few of the blunders appearing on only five pages.¹⁷

Swaggart notes that “in this book on Catholic tradition, I have literally bent over backwards to ensure that every statement is true”.¹⁸ His contortions do not seem to have helped much, perhaps because he relied on few sources other than his imagination and bitter ex-Catholics. His bibliography consists of only fifteen works, some of which he apparently did not use at all in writing his book.¹⁹ In *Catholicism & Christianity* there are dozens of quotations—largely from anti-Catholics, but also from ancient Catholic writers, even from papal encyclicals—yet page numbers are given only twice,²⁰ and usually the titles of books from which quotations are taken are not given. Often the writer’s name is withheld (or not known), as when Swaggart introduces a quotation with the words “one Catholic stated”.²¹

The truth is that Swaggart does not know what pages or books or authors the quotations he uses came from (presuming they are legitimate quotations in the first place), because he never read the quoted works. He lifted the quotations from the writings of other anti-Catholics, who failed to give citations in *their* books. “My information has come primarily from former

Catholic priests”, he admits,²² He refers to Bart Brewer’s *Pilgrimage from Rome* and Clark Butterfield’s *Night Journey from Rome to the New Jerusalem*, hardly books from which one could expect to learn much about Catholic beliefs or history. (It may give one a feel for the reliability of these works to know that Brewer’s was published by Bob Jones University Press and Butterfield’s is distributed by the Antichrist Information Center, which is run by Alberto Rivera, the hero of Jack Chick’s comic book *Alberto*.)

If Swaggart “bent over backwards”, literally or otherwise, there is scant evidence of it. His book is a fine example of the danger of mixing a little knowledge with considerable prejudice. If he were less prejudiced—that is, less inclined to accept blindly every unflattering thing said about the Catholic Church—and more knowledgeable, Jimmy Swaggart would be embarrassed that his name is on such a travesty, because he is not really a bad man, just a man badly misinformed.

No one would mistake him for an academician; he does not lie awake at night wondering whether he did his homework. What he is is famous, influential, and effective. He is even, according to Barbara Nauer, who heads the Catholic Writer and Artist Guild, a nice man—and she has some grounds to say that, since she considers Jimmy and Frances Swaggart her friends and once spent three hours “yelling at and pounding the table” with the man. (She is mentioned, but not by name, in *Catholicism & Christianity*.)²³ “Swaggart’s irk with Catholicism seems to rise from thoroughly honorable motives”, she says. “Swaggart’s bias against Catholicism, given his fervid Protestantism, is in no way unreasonable. Swaggart seems ready to like *Catholics*.” The task for Catholics is to “stop wringing their hands about Swaggart and start educating him about the true Church”. The same should be done for less-famous fundamentalists. If Catholics will not do that, “we *deserve* to live with his horsewhippings”.²⁴

Bill Jackson’s Christians Evangelizing Catholics is a one-man ministry unknown to most Catholics, even to most fundamentalists. By contrast, Jimmy Swaggart’s name is recognized even by people who have never watched his program. Where Jackson works with at most thousands of dollars, Swaggart has tens of millions. In a year Jackson might speak to a few thousand people; on any Sunday Swaggart speaks to thousands of thousands.

Yet there are few Jimmy Swaggarts. The number of television evangelists is small, and there are few radio preachers who have syndicated programs. But there are hundreds of fundamentalists who host radio or television

programs that are broadcast over just one station, and there are thousands who have ministries along the lines of Jackson's. While most of these operations are restricted to one town or one section of a town (Jackson's is geographically large as such things go), they have a cumulative impact far greater than Swaggart's because there are so many of them.

The demographics are unavailable, but of Swaggart's three million American viewers, surely only a few hundred thousand are Catholics. (Other stars of religious television would enjoy higher proportions since their anti-Catholicism is muted.) Even Swaggart's Catholic viewers will be more influenced by the evangelist that comes to the door than by the evangelist heard on television. Most Catholics who meet fundamentalism meet it at the local level, and, if they are convinced by its arguments, they are convinced because they have spoken directly with local fundamentalists who have taken them through the Bible and various tracts.

The most important thing about Swaggart's ministry so far as Catholics are concerned—what makes it as influential as it is—is that it legitimizes anti-Catholicism and emboldens local fundamentalists to knock on Catholic doors. They normally would not take such a step without considerable prodding. On the whole, fundamentalists are reserved, wary of talking about religion outside their own circles, and until recent years they largely kept to themselves. But Swaggart and the other media preachers are exemplars. Their apparent success in taking on the Roman institution (which gives no audible answer to their charges) encourages the people who gather for Bible study each week at Good Book Baptist.

Chapter 7

Appealing to the Young

Anti-Catholic fundamentalists are not necessarily old fogies. Exhibit number one: the late Keith Green, popular religious singer who was killed in a plane crash. His *Last Days Newsletter*, published by his Last Days Ministries of Lindale, Texas, carried four installments of the *Catholic Chronicles*, each “edited and compiled by Keith Green”. These issues of the newsletter were so well received that they were reprinted in 1980 and 1981 in the form of tracts. The tracts found a wide audience. Though no longer available from Last Days Ministries,¹ they remain influential and deserve mention.

Give them their due. They are simply the best-looking tracts put out by either side in the fundamentalist-Catholic squabble. The typography is clean, almost booklike (italics, bold, reduced footnotes), there is original artwork, and the printing is in two colors, making for black text, red headlines, and a pink background. Not unjustifiably, the outfit that ran the presses is called Pretty Good Printing.

Somewhat surprisingly, the first tract is on the Holy Eucharist; it is subtitled “Eating the Flesh of Deity”. Green explains to his readers why he avoids “the more obvious departures from biblical foundation—such as the worship of and prayers to the Virgin Mary, the infallibility of the pope, purgatory and prayers for the dead. . . .” They will be discussed later, he says. “But for this first article I believe that we should get right to the root” of Catholic worship, and that is the Eucharist. He at least knows what the opposition’s core devotional belief is.

There follows a reasonably fair explication of Catholic doctrines, although it is laced with smart asides and an abundance of exclamation points. Green gives extensive quotations from the canons of Trent, getting in his jabs by prefacing his account with biblical verses such as “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image” (Ex 20:4), the point being, of course, that the host is a graven image. He then comments on those scriptural passages Catholics use in proof of the Eucharist, and he makes the standard argument that the Greek

in Mt 26:26 (“This is my body. . .”) can only mean the bread “represents”, “signifies”, or “stands for” Christ. He admits the Greek phrase is *touto esti*, and he says it means “this is” (which is true), but he insists, contrary to any Greek grammar book, that the verb can only be taken in the symbolic sense.

Regarding this and all the other topics he considers, his arguments are unoriginal. He even concludes this tract with a few paragraphs on the “real” origin of the Eucharist. Like Ralph Woodrow—perhaps because he read Woodrow’s *Babylon Mystery Religion*—Green finds the Eucharist prefigured in the worship of Osiris and in Mithraism.

The attack is stepped up in the second of the *Catholic Chronicles*. This one is on the Mass and is subtitled *Jesus Dies Again*. Those with good eyesight will catch the footnote on the first page, where credit is given to one of Bart Brewer’s tracts, another example of the way anti-Catholic fundamentalists rely on and quote one another.

On the inside is a reproduction of a Gustav Doré drawing of the Crucifixion. The text is again unoriginal so far as Green’s arguments are concerned, but he differs from other fundamentalist writers in that he quotes Catholic sources. Canons of Trent are given, as are passages from Vatican II and some lines from a booklet distributed by the Knights of Columbus’ Catholic Information Service.

Green sees the falsity of the Mass in its apparent violation of Christ’s words that “It is finished” (Jn 19:30). Not distinguishing between Christ’s death and his sacrifice, he says in the Mass Christ dies anew, and thus Catholics think his task was not finished at all. Green is unable to perceive that the sacrifice can be perpetuated (presented again) even though the death occurred once. There follow four selections from Hebrews, each, to Green, attesting to the contradiction between what the Mass purports to be and what the Bible says. “Once for all” (Heb 10:10) is the banner fundamentalists wave. Christ died once, so Catholics, who think he dies again at each Mass, aren’t really Christians, but cultists.

To establish the Catholic Church as nothing but a cult, Green presents the third tract in his series, *Salvation According to Rome*, The largest tract (11 by 17 inches, folded to make four pages) and the longest (about 4,000 words), it was surely not the work of a single evening at the typewriter. It is a formidable piece of paper—not in the sense of the soundness of the arguments, but in their intensity, their seeming thoroughness, their ability to impress the theologically uneducated (which is to say just about everyone in

the pews, whether fundamentalist or Catholic).

Green's comparison is between "salvation by grace", which implies an absolute assurance of salvation, and the Catholic sacramental system. He begins by deriding the Catholic distinction between mortal and venial sins, saying "there is in fact no such thing as a venial sin. All sin is mortal! It is true that some sins are worse than others, but it is also true that all sins if not forgiven bring death to the soul." He talismanically quotes Scripture: "The wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23); "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek 18:4); but overlooks 1 John 5:17: "Not all sin is fatal."

This is a good example of a common failing among fundamentalists, and not just those who are actively anti-Catholic. They memorize their lessons well, but they memorize selectively because they are taught only certain things. Although they read the entire Bible, with, naturally enough, special emphasis on the New Testament, verses that do not mesh with what their pastors have told them are either skipped or just not perceived as being trouble spots. On any one topic, they learn verses that, concatenated, seem to prove conclusively their position, and it is on these that they concentrate their apologetics. Few of them seriously ponder the meaning of those large chunks of the Bible that are pushed into the background. It is the rare fundamentalist who will go verse by verse through Scripture, seeing if he can piece together a coherent whole. In fact, most ex-fundamentalists say their first doubts about fundamentalism came when they read a biblical passage for the hundredth time and suddenly realized that it did not square with what they'd been taught at Sunday school.

Convinced, in the first place, that the Bible is easy to understand, and convinced that all its parts admit but one interpretation and that anyone interpreting differently must be acting in bad faith, they had given no thought to the possibility that the Catholic position might have something in its favor. The Bible must, unless the reader is not a Christian at all, lead him to but one interpretation, which happens to be identical with that of his fundamentalist pastor. There is no point in looking elsewhere.

Though they held this view, these onetime fundamentalists could not entirely escape the plain words of the text. First this, then that verse would bother them. They would read that "not all sin is fatal" and wonder, not whether sin is to be divided between mortal and venial (even ex-Catholic fundamentalists generally have no feel for those terms), but, more simply, how that verse could be reconciled with apparently contradictory ones. Their

teachers' technique of selective quotation (which they believed was not selective, but exhaustive) kept them in line, but the number of these discomfiting passages grew, and eventually a critical mass was reached.

In *Witness*, Whittaker Chambers explained that the communist, before his break with that ideology, one night wakes up in a cold sweat, convinced he is hearing screams. What he hears is his subconscious—and perhaps his conscience—finally piecing together stray fragments, and he realizes what communism really is. He can Caste its reality. On one level he in fact always has known, or at least for a long time known, what it is, but his prejudice has kept the implications of that knowledge submerged. Then he hears screams.²

It is somewhat the same with the fundamentalist before his conversion to another brand of Christianity. For a long time he has gathered these ill-fitting verses, “pondering them in his heart”. From their existence he has drawn no conclusion, trusting that at length he will be shown just how they fit into his creed, until, seemingly out of the blue, it occurs to him that fundamentalism may be fundamentally wrong.

But this is getting ahead of the story. It is enough to note here that Keith Green's tracts are fine examples of the best small-compass, anti-Catholic writing by fundamentalists. He uses all the standard techniques, all the pat phrases, and he uses them convincingly—or so it must seem, since the tracts have enjoyed a considerable success, particularly among the young who used to listen to his songs.

The fourth of the *Catholic Chronicles* asks, *What Did Vatican II Really Change?* The answer: nothing. It is a favorite ploy of fundamentalists to say that the Church made a big production out of changing itself, bringing things up to date, telling the world it was sloughing off its old prejudices and needless doctrinal encumbrances, when in fact all the essentials remain the same. It was all a public relations gambit, designed to elicit sympathy for a Church in decline. And it worked. Most people have been fooled, but not the fundamentalists.

Some of this, of course, is quite true. There have been changes since the Council, but there has been no alteration at all in basic doctrines or in principles of operation. The Catholic Church is still the sole true Church (it is in the Catholic Church that Christ's Church “subsists”, according to Vatican II),³ and, while Friday abstinence may no longer be required, the Church has not abandoned the principle that religious authority may legislate on matters of discipline and devotion,

Green quotes at length from Loraine Boettner's *Roman Catholicism*. Boettner, called by Green a "noted Evangelical authority on Roman Catholic doctrine", looks at Vatican II and sadly concludes that "an infallible church simply cannot repent". Rome will always be Rome, and Vatican II changed nothing of importance. The Catholic Church has scraped off its barnacles and is ready to take to the seas again. This enemy of truth may be more seaworthy now than it was a generation ago. "The agelong danger that Protestantism has faced from the Roman Church has not diminished", cautions Boettner; "in fact, it may well have increased."⁴ Like Queen Victoria, he is not amused, nor is Keith Green, nor, one supposes, are the impressionable readers of the *Catholic Chronicles*.

From Texas and the home of Last Days Ministries the focus shifts to New York, where we find another organization that appeals largely to the young, Solid Rock Ministries. It mails out, at irregular intervals, a newsletter that carries, below the mailing label, the line "Jesus is coming back soon,. . . Are you ready?" According to the head of the organization, Donald Spitz, among those who should not feel comfortable in answering that question are Catholics, for the simple reason that Catholics, if they remain Catholics, are damned.

One issue of the newsletter opens with two revelations granted Spitz (they read like the pedestrian stuff some Catholic visionaries claim to have been told), then it goes on to warn of one of Satan's favorite tricks, religion. "Another of his favorite lies is to make you 'religious'. He'll keep you entangled in rituals, sacraments, ceremonies, and other 'traditions of men' that have been manufactured into doctrines."

The reader is not surprised to discover, a few pages further along, a letter from a young woman who explains, as an ex-Catholic, that she knows Solid Rock Ministries is "persecuted and maligned because of the stand [it has] taken opposing the false doctrines of Catholicism". She then recounts her childhood upbringing and the discovery, as a teenager, that "despite my fear of God and my strongly held moral beliefs, I was more prone to do evil than good. Countless penances did not improve my sinful disposition", and she says she ended near despair. She was invited repeatedly to a Bible study, but regularly declined. At last, her resistance gone, she decided to go. "I intended to teach those 'born again fanatics', those 'Jesus freaks', a lesson in Catholicism." She was surprised to discover they were studying not a catechism, but the Gospel according to John. (What did she expect at a

Protestant Bible study?)

“As the sweetness of the Word of God gently rolled over my ‘sin tired’ senses, I found that I was unable to criticize the teaching of the Word”—perhaps because, as a Catholic, she had never been introduced to the study of the Bible and was in no position to raise even the simplest objections to odd interpretations of it. In six months, after attending the classes weekly, she was “born again”. She tried attending Mass at St. Patrick’s Cathedral, and her soul “was filled with rage when I realized the damnable crime that was being committed against God and against millions of sincere, yet spiritually blinded people”. It is these people, these Catholics, that she and the people at Solid Rock Ministries mean to reach. They aim mainly at the young.

Her letter is followed by an article on “Cults and More Cults”. The author is Spitz. After perfunctory mention of the Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Mormons, he gets right to the point. The real enemy is the Catholic Church. His arguments are unexceptional and are not worth reproducing at length. One story of his must suffice. “One day at Mass [this was before he unpoped] I remember the priest reading from the Gospel of Matthew, about not using vain repetitions in prayer. I thought to myself, ‘That’s very beautiful, and also really makes sense.’ No sooner was the reading completed when the service continued on with some ‘canned prayers’ repeated numerous times, followed by a sermon on the ‘Joys of the Rosary’ ”. He closes by noting, with Loraine Boettner and others, that Vatican II really changed nothing of substance. Indeed, he even refers to *Unam Sanctam* and says it is still a fair indicator of the Catholic position (true enough, if understood properly). As Spitz puts it, the bull, issued by Boniface VIII, said “submission to the authority of the Pope is a requirement for salvation”. The Catholic Church is out to get us all.

Chapter 8

At the Fringe

“There has been a multi-million dollar campaign made through the media to convince people that I am a bigoted, anti-Catholic, hate-literature publisher”, wrote Jack Chick in the introduction to *Smokescreens*.¹ “And do you know something? They have been very effective in convincing people that this is what I am,”

Apparently they have, whoever “they” are, because Jack Chick is generally regarded as the king of the anti-Catholic publishers. He has received more attention in the Catholic press since 1980 than all other professional anti-Catholics combined, and his rantings against the Church have inspired even Protestant publications, such as *Christianity Today*, to investigate his operation. His ideas are so perverse, his hate mongering so outlandish, that even some anti-Catholics shun him. If the average Catholic has heard anything about the recent revival of anti-Catholic prejudice, he has heard about Jack Chick.

Because of all the publicity, two things have happened. Chick and his chief assistant, Alberto Rivera (who claims to be a onetime Jesuit and bishop), have been given a prominence in the anti-Catholic movement they in fact do not have, their writings seeming to be more influential than they really are, and other anti-Catholic organizations—the ones that produce the converts to fundamentalism—have been ignored. It may be that in some Catholic publications Chick and Rivera have received more column inches than anyone other than the Pope. And they simply have not been worth it, because their barks are far out of proportion to their bites. They make good copy but few converts and nowhere near the converts one would expect from all the fireworks.

The other problem is that coverage of them has meant coverage of other anti-Catholic organizations has been shallow. While full-page articles have been devoted to Chick Publications’ comics, in most Catholic papers only passing comments have been given to the organizations that really have been

dragging Catholics out of the Church and into fundamentalism. Chick and Rivera have thrown something of a shadow across the fundamentalist landscape, and it is sometimes hard to realize there are other groups lurking in the bushes. One reason for this is that Chick has sought publicity as though he were running for office, while most professional anti-Catholics quietly go about their work, making no effort to grab headlines. They want converts, not notoriety. To seek the public eye is to put oneself on the spot.

It is one thing to make strange claims about the Catholic religion, but something else to find yourself having to support the claims with facts and rational arguments, which you might have to do if you shout too loudly. So most fundamentalists are reserved. They push their ideas, but avoid confrontations that force them to debate. Only when they think they are up against ill-informed papists (and no one else) do they open their satchels, drag out a Bible, and ask, "How does *this* square with what the Catholic Church says?" But Chick does not worry about having his arguments fall flat because he does not argue. He just, well, pontificates and then ignores challenges to fight.

None of this means Chick is not worth covering. He is. His colorful comic books and pocket-sized tracts have been widely distributed, and some Catholics, particularly impressionable teenagers and young adults, have accepted his notions and left the Barque of Peter at the first port of call. But most people influenced by Chick have been opposed to Catholicism all along and never gave any allegiance to Rome. Chick's materials merely heighten their native bigotry and give them the satisfaction of knowing that their prejudices are, in some circles, socially acceptable. After all, here is someone much more prejudiced than they, someone who has achieved a measure of notoriety, someone who has put the enemy on the defensive, and he seems to be doing quite well, thank you.

Chick's literature would be unimportant, quite unworthy of the sustained treatment it has received in the Catholic press, if his were the only anti-Catholic organization in the nation. There are few flat-Earthers, and no one pays them much heed. They would be worth examining, perhaps, if there were societies of oval-Earthers who received legitimacy because they could separate themselves in the public mind from those who think the world is shaped like a fat dish. Chick's very existence makes all the other anti-Catholic groups look moderate, and they are therefore more influential than they otherwise would be. Fundamentalists who are squeamish about

supporting all of Chick's theories owe him a vote of thanks; he makes them look good.

It is similar to the big lie technique. Most people, even most with an ingrained prejudice against the Church, realize the comic books are grotesqueries. They seem to say, "We acknowledge Jack Chick is overzealous; we admit that. But his zealotry only demonstrates that what Mission to Catholics, the Conversion Center, and Jimmy Swaggart say must be accurate. These other evangelists have eliminated Chick's infelicities, and what we are left with is the unvarnished truth." It is this kind of thinking that makes Chick's work important.

He first gained notoriety with the publication of the comic book *Alberto* in 1979. This is Alberto Rivera's story—or so it is claimed. The thirty-two pages are well illustrated, in the style of Marvel Comics. The drawings are detailed, even explicit, making no effort to leave the reader wondering. The story begins in Spain in 1942. The first few pages recount the last hours of Alberto's mother. The young Alberto is shown at her deathbed. The priest in attendance tells him "your mother has not only received the sacraments, but special indulgences by the pope, our Holy Father". It thus should be an easy death, but not so. The next box shows her last moments. She sees "horrible monsters, coming at me!!" Hands raised to keep the visions at bay, she cries, "Don't you see them? They want to put me in fire! They want to get me, Alberto! I don't want to die and go there!" But, of course, she does die, and she does go there, even though we are told her family knew she was a saint. "To my knowledge," said her husband, "she never missed going to Mass." Alberto, not comforted by the priest, thinks that "It's all a lie! The sacraments didn't help my mother. . . . The Church didn't help her when she needed help and comfort." Despite his disillusionment, Alberto becomes a priest.

We next see him, now "Dr." Alberto Rivera, in San Diego in 1979, mysteriously run off the freeway by some enemy, he finds temporary refuge through a friend and begins to recount his story, beginning with the true nature of the Church. The tale is familiar to anyone who has read Maria Monk's revelations. In Spain, for instance, convents and monasteries are connected by tunnels; along the passages are chambers where the bodies of illicitly conceived (and quickly murdered) infants are buried. The Pope does not actually run the Church; the real ruler is the Jesuit General. The tortures of the Inquisition are recounted in glorious, dripping color. And so forth.

Rivera was trained from youth, he says, to infiltrate and subvert

Protestantism. The denominations assigned to him were the Plymouth Brethren, Pentecostal, Baptist, and United Evangelical. He was fabulously successful and was rewarded by secretly being made a bishop. His credentials are demonstrated through a photograph of what purports to be an identification card issued him by the Spanish government. His photograph (he is wearing a Roman collar) seems to have been superimposed over the card. The reader is also shown “a copy of the last official certification given to me just before I left Spain in 1967”. Investigations by *Christianity Today*² and the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights³ confirmed that neither the Diocese of Madrid, where Rivera claims to have been a priest, nor the Jesuits have any record of him, but what can one expect from papist conspirators?

Alberto was followed by *Double-Cross*, a recounting of Rivera’s further exploits, particularly the rescue of his sister from the clutches of rapacious nuns (her escape from the convent seems to have been modeled closely on Maria Monk’s) and Rivera’s flight from hit squads sent after him by the Vatican. The reader is regaled with a photograph of Kathryn Kuhlman meeting Paul VI and a drawing of Jimmy Carter meeting John Paul II. These well-known Christians were in cahoots with Rome. And so was someone else—Jim Jones turns out to have been a Jesuit who did himself in, along with his followers, in fulfillment of his Jesuit oath.

Later additions to the Chick Publications library include *The Godfathers*, which demonstrates that the Catholic Church is the “Mother of Abominations” referred to in Revelation 17; *The Force*, “a prophetic study revealing the occult side of the Whore of Revelation”; and *The Big Betrayal*, based on Charles Chiniquy’s *50 Years in the Church of Rome*, which demonstrates that the Church arranged Abraham Lincoln’s assassination. If something meatier than comics is wanted, the reader can turn to Chick Publications’ illustrated catalogue and order books such as *The Two Babylons*, another nineteenth-century potboiler; *Night Journey from Rome to the New Jerusalem*, by Clark Butterfield, allegedly an ex-priest; *The Vatican-Moscow-Washington Alliance*, by longtime Catholic-baiter Avro Manhattan; or even *The Secret History of the Jesuits*, which “boldly exposes the Vatican’s involvement in world politics, intrigues, and the fomenting of wars throughout history”.

Then there is *Smokescreens*. This ninety-three-pager is actually a transcript of a cassette the author made. He markets it by saying that the reader gets not

only the words of the cassette, but revealing photographs as well. “What you are going to read in this book is absolutely devastating.” He explains that “we believe at Chick Publications that the Whore of Revelation is the Roman Catholic Institution”,⁴ and he names such Protestant lights as Luther, Calvin, Knox, and, in more recent years, Moody and Spurgeon as agreeing with this conclusion. The title of the book comes from the smokescreens the Jesuits have set to make people think the Whore of Revelation is something that will come in the distant future, not something that is present today and headquartered in the Vatican.

There follow several short chapters: one on “The Wafer-God”, another looking at the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre, a third on the way Croatian Catholics supposedly backed the Nazis, Then come chapters on the application of Revelation 17 to the Church, the way Catholics have secretly gained influence through the television shows of supposedly Protestant evangelists, and the Vatican’s long-term plans for conquest.

Next comes self-congratulation. Chick explains how brave he was to publish Alberto Rivera’s story. “When it finally dawned on me that we were being set up for another inquisition, I realized what a mess I’d be in if I sounded the alarm and the Christians wouldn’t believe it, I could lose our business, our reputation and friends. If I printed Alberto’s story, I would be going into a battle that would jeopardize my family and my own life.” But he knew what to do. “I went before the Lord in prayer and the thing I dreaded came to pass. I asked the Lord if I should attack the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth. Should I attack the Vatican? The Lord said yes. And so we published *Alberto*.” Although he followed the Lord’s explicit directions, Chick didn’t get the backing he expected from other fundamentalists. He said of one, “Here is a man I used to pray for. But no longer. The Lord stopped me”—the same Lord, apparently, who instructed his followers to love their enemies, even their former accomplices. “When the heat came on Chick Publications for what we were doing, I was amazed. It all came through the same group. There seemed to be a link between all these men who are promoting the story that Alberto is a fraud.” He cites the stories in *Christianity Today*, *Cornerstone* (a magazine appealing to young evangelicals), and *Our Sunday Visitor*.⁵

Then he demonstrates there is no honor among professional anti-Catholics. He attacks Bill Jackson of Christians Evangelizing Catholics and Bart Brewer, head of Mission to Catholics. “Both of these men are supposed to be

operating ministries to Catholics. And yet, they're going around to churches trying to destroy our credibility." Well, not quite. Brewer, for instance, noted in his newsletter, *Challenger*, that he has been asked often about Alberto Rivera's credibility, and he would neither support nor disavow either Rivera or Jack Chick. On this matter he took the agnostic position.

After Jack Chick got the publicity he so ardently sought, he had to go it alone. Not entirely alone, perhaps, for he still had Alberto Rivera, who could tell him about the "blueprint for Catholic America", something he was briefed on when a Jesuit. It went all the way back to the time of the Pilgrims. Remember those people leaving Europe for America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, seeking religious freedom, people such as the Pilgrims? All Protestants? Hardly. Among them were numerous papists from England, Ireland, and France, "These were plants", Rivera told Chick. "The Jesuits made sure this part of our history was erased and removed." Once the fifth column was in place, its task was to "destroy or control all the Christian schools across America. Throughout the years, Jesuits, working undercover, have gotten into special committees on school boards to remove the emphasis on the Bible and replace it with psychology as found in the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola." They transformed public schools into Ignatian retreats. After the schools came the judiciary, then politics, then the military and newspapers. "Even back in the time of Lincoln over half the newspapers in the United States were controlled by the Vatican."⁶

Chick asked Rivera, "How Catholic is our military position?"

"Horrifying", said Rivera.

"I then asked about the political picture."

"It is even worse."

"Then I said: What about the Catholic structure of the judiciary?"

"It is very painful because of the heavy Jesuit penetration of this area", said Rivera.

"Is this preparing the way for the coming inquisition?" asked Chick.

"That's correct", replied Rivera. "First for anarchy. We were briefed that after all these years of penetration and infiltration, what was needed was riots and anarchy in order to finally take over. By the time the Roman Catholic Institution is ready to take over politically, militarily, educationally, and religiously, that means they will have some legal basis to do so."

Is there any hope? wondered Chick. Yes, said Rivera, but only if Chick Publications' materials are distributed even more widely. The United States,

conveniently enough, is where the prophecies of the Last Days will be fulfilled, and the ground has to be prepared. “If it were not for the publications we printed, we would be in a different situation today.”⁷

Time grows short. Protestant pastors have to be on guard; all the worst things they have heard about Catholics are true. Those are Catholic eyes staring at them in the night. “I was recently told”, recounts Chick, “that in 1949 an ex-Jesuit priest told a Rev. Eubanks in California that when the Vatican takes control of the United States, every pastor and his family will be shot in the head.”⁸ And if that is not convincing, what is? What further proof is needed, save perhaps the name of the ex-Jesuit, the full name of Rev. Eubanks, and the name of the man who recently told all this to Chick? It should be enough to know that “the Jesuits, the Illuminati, the Opus Dei, and the Masons”⁹ are the real makers of smokescreens. One need only keep his eyes open.

Many Catholics have been doing just that, keeping them open and on Jack Chick and Alberto Rivera. The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights has reported on Chick Publications since at least 1981, and *Our Sunday Visitor* and *The National Catholic Register* have run articles, short and long, about the duo. Chick no doubt has made a tidy sum in distributing his dozens of comics, books, and tracts. Rivera is in some small demand as a speaker and no doubt finds it profitable to play on fears of uninformed Protestants. He operates what he calls the Antichrist Information Center and is available for public talks.

Although most anti-Catholic organizations will not have anything to do with Jack Chick, Chick Publications, or Alberto Rivera, there is one that will. End Time Books, part of the Holy Alamo Christian Church, Consecrated, offers for sale the cassette version of *Smokescreens*. Also for sale are other books advertised by Chick: Edmond Paris’ *The Secret History of the Jesuits*, Avro Manhattan’s *The Vatican-Moscow-Washington Alliance*, and Charles Chiniquy’s *The Priest, the Woman, and the Confessional*.

Tony Alamo is best known for distributing a poster claiming all the major news media “are secretly owned by the Vatican”. At the top of the poster is a large-print “Warning!” It is revealed that in Romanist hands are *Life*, *People*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, three television networks, the Hearst newspaper chain, *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, “and many other local newspapers, T.V. and radio stations”. It seems the Vatican uses these media “to exonerate themselves [*sic*] from crimes they [*sic*] have done and are doing . . . and to

smear and malign who they [sic] will". At the bottom of the poster is a big "Watch out!!"

The poster and the considerable publicity it received were the first most people had heard about what was originally called the Tony & Susan Alamo Christian Foundation, which began as a Christian street ministry in Southern California. It was established by Tony Alamo, a former pop singer, and his wife, Susan. The Alamos moved their operation to Alma, Arkansas, where they built an empire of unrelated businesses. Their holdings even included the largest country-and-western clothing store in Nashville. Members of the Alamo cult worked in its enterprises as "volunteers", thereby allowing Alamo to amass millions.

Susan Alamo died in 1982. Tony was convinced she would be resurrected in short order, and faithful cultists kept round-the-clock vigils, convinced their prayers would bring her back. Just about the time his followers might have begun doubting the likelihood of his wife's imminent return, Alamo hit on a new angle, anti-Catholicism. It was in early 1984 that his posters appeared in at least fifty cities around the country, and not long after came *The Pope's Secrets*, an eight-page, closely spaced explanation of the Vatican's shenanigans. In that booklet the reader learns that a conveniently dead Australian archbishop said "the demands of the holy father (the Pope) are that the public services should be 100% Roman Catholic soon. Care must be taken that no suspicion may be raised when Roman Catholics are secretly given more government jobs than Protestants, Jews, and other heretics." This revelation is followed by quotations from Chick Publications' books.

Next comes a history lesson. After World War II, explains Alamo, the Vatican set up the John Birch Society so the American public would become concerned about communism and would overlook the Vatican's encroachments. The Vatican likewise underwrote "every major terrorist group in the world. The reason for this is to keep people's thoughts on unexplainable, insane tragedies that their [sic] terrorist groups are committing while the Vatican is busy undermining all the governments of the world so they [sic] can have world dominion (papal power). When terrorist news hits, it is so shocking that it minimizes the news of the Vatican taking away the U.S. Constitution and of people being deprived of their religious freedoms." Alamo does not explain how there can be any news of these Catholic usurpations if the Vatican controls the media—but that is a quibble.

There is no reason to recount each of the tales in this flyer. The author

demonstrates an active imagination, one that takes him far beyond what even Alberto Rivera has been able to concoct. Rivera, for instance, was unable to discover the “liquor and wine slave labor camps” run by the Christian Brothers and other religious orders that “unlawfully use free labor (thousands of Roman Catholic monks)”.

In 1985 Tony Alamo remarried. Since it would have been inappropriate for his organization to have continued carrying his former wife’s name, the group is now known as the Holy Alamo Christian Church, Consecrated. (Its literature does not make clear whether the adjective “Holy” is meant to modify “Alamo” or “Church”.)

In a tract called *It Was All a Lie!* the second Mrs. Alamo, Elizabeth, assures the reader that “you can find out all about ‘them’: the Roman Catholic cult, the harlot of Revelation,. . . and about how God has told throughout the entirety of the King James Version of the Holy Bible about her, *as well as her falling*, immediately before the Lord Jesus Christ returns to this earth.”

She explains that “I understand *now* why the Inquisitions and the Crusades were minimized in history classes, why propaganda was supposedly only a ‘Russian tactic’ and why Latin was the mandatory language in junior high school. The conversations I had overheard about Catholicism as a child were absolute truth. The Catholic motto of Satan is obvious—confuse, convince, convert.

If there is any anti-Catholic propaganda that needs to be ignored rather than opposed, it is Tony Alamo’s. His efforts are so extreme they make extremists look moderate. So why not ignore him entirely? Because, like Alberto Rivera and his comic books, this is another example of a fanatic making run-of-the-mill anti-Catholics look good. The public is always willing to accept someone or some organization that appeals to its unrespectable prejudices if it can, at the same time, reject propagandists at the fringe. Alamo may have hornswoggled enough people to work for him for free that he is now a wealthy man, but he really has no substantial following, nor do his ideas.

The work of Chick, Rivera, and Alamo as point men of fundamentalist anti-Catholicism legitimizes Mission to Catholics, the Conversion Center, and the other “moderate” anti-Catholic organizations. The three have allowed the groups that effect conversions to appear reasonable and respectable by distancing themselves from their foolishness. “Moderate” anti-Catholics are

seen as making the necessary distinctions, as thinking the questions through carefully—which is nonsense, but convenient nonsense.

With the election of John F. Kennedy, pundits said nativism was on the wane. The anti-Catholicism that had been a part of America's heritage from the first—and that at times supplicated into political movements such as the Know-Nothings in the 1850s and the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s—was gone, done in by the wisdom of the electorate, and it would not return. But it has returned, in a more virulent strain than has been seen in more than two generations. There have been at least two main causes.

First, fundamentalism itself is having an upsurge. Largely dormant since the Scopes Trial, it has grown rapidly in the last twenty years, partly as a reaction to liberal Protestantism. If liberal Protestantism, as represented by the “mainline” churches, has as its symbol the question mark, fundamentalism has as its symbol the exclamation point. It is attractive because it stands for something, and that something is definite.

The apparent weakness of Catholicism is the second reason the anti-Catholic element in fundamentalism is growing. When Kennedy was elected, few thought of the Church as anything but monolithic. It had come through” the milder anti-Catholic movement of the 1920s with nary a scratch, and in doing so it had confirmed the status of Catholics, who as recently as fifty years before that were, mainly, unwelcome newcomers to America. But the attack on the Church in the 1920s, spearheaded by the Klan (which concentrated its efforts on the Church as represented by immigrants, not on blacks), fizzled because the Church was perceived as being too strong; it seemed to be a fight not worth entering. Not so in recent years. Even fundamentalists who may touch no literature other than the Bible sense the Catholic Church has had problems, and many of them have been led to believe the problems are insurmountable and, in fact, are indicative of its ultimate collapse. They think Catholicism's true nature is finally catching up with it. Like wild dogs that attack only injured prey, professional anti-Catholics have gone after the Church because they sense irresolution. The old Church too easily survived attacks such as theirs. They think they can get away with something now, and they are running hard.

Examples of fundamentalism's darkest side could be repeated without end. There is no need to examine dusty books or yellowed leaflets to find them. They exist in numbers that were unimaginable only a few years ago. For the most part, Catholics have little notion of the depth of anti-Catholic sentiment.

The most fanatic of the anti-Catholics—people such as Chick, Rivera, and Alamo—work on a different level than do garden-variety fundamentalists. The latter do what they do because they seek the truth. They are willing to follow syllogisms to their conclusions, even though they have uncritically followed some badly premised syllogisms to get where they are. They think they have discovered religious truth, and what they have discovered impels them to share it with others and to do whatever is necessary to make others see what they see. Often they take liberties with the facts, although usually they are unconscious of doing so. To them, their arguments seem conclusive. They can discover no weaknesses—although, to be sure, they have not searched particularly hard for any.

They are like political radicals. They have isolated a problem (their own sinfulness, in the case of fundamentalists; society's, in the case of radicals) and are determined to effect a solution. In doing that they will have to remove obstacles that stand in their way. For radicals, the main obstacle has been America itself; for fundamentalists, it is the Catholic Church, an even tougher nut to crack. Radicals willingly put aside other concerns and devote their time to the Cause; it is expected of them. They are defined by their pursuit of what they perceive to be justice. Fundamentalists are equally committed, but they often find themselves doing what others would expect them not to do. Everything about them speaks of reticence, yet they attack what they believe to be the most nefarious institution in the world, certainly the longest lived. Those who cannot fight Rome publicly read about, listen to, and send contributions to those who can.

Few fundamentalists are up in arms about Methodism, Episcopalianism, or Lutheranism, but every fundamentalist is worried about the Catholic Church. His interest first might be piqued by one or more of the fanatics, or he might become aware of the problem by hearing a more respectable fundamentalist preacher or by being given a newsletter from a ministry devoted to saving Catholics from certain doom. He comes to understand it is the Catholic Church that is the embodiment of eschatological evil. His attitude might be one of unadorned hatred—this seems to be ever more popular, or at least ever more public—or it might be a quiet, gentlemanly dislike. In either case, he has put the Catholic Church in a category no other religion or movement can occupy.

If he is a former Catholic, he brings with him all the intellectual and emotional baggage that implies. That often means he will be a fiercer anti-

Catholic than the person brought up as a fundamentalist, perhaps because he feels he has more to atone for, perhaps because he blames the Church for his own failings. Regardless, he fears it as a tool of powers the average Catholic is only dimly aware of, and he considers himself duty bound to help those still in the clutches of Rome.

Chapter 9

Inspiration of the Bible

The Reformers said the Bible is the sole source of religious truth, and its understanding must be found by looking only at the words of the text. No outside authority may impose an interpretation, and no outside authority, such as the Church, has been established by Christ as an arbiter.¹ As heirs of the Reformers, fundamentalists work on the basis of *sola scriptura*,² and they advance this notion at every opportunity. One might think it would be easy for them to explain why they believe this principle.

Yet there is perhaps no greater frustration, in dealing with fundamentalists, than in trying to pin them down on why the Bible should be taken as a rule of faith at all, let alone as the sole rule of faith. It all reduces to the question of why fundamentalists accept the Bible as inspired, because the Bible can be taken as a rule of faith only if it is first held to be inspired and thus inerrant.

Now this is a problem that does not keep most Christians awake at night. Most have never given it any serious thought. To the extent they believe in the Bible, they believe in it because they operate in a milieu that is, if post-Christian in many ways, still steeped in Christian ways of thought and presuppositions. A lukewarm Christian who would not give the slightest credence to the Koran would think twice about casting aspersions on the Bible. It has a certain official status for him, even if he cannot explain it. One might say he accepts the Bible as inspired (whatever that may mean for him) for some “cultural” reason, but that, of course, is hardly a sufficient reason, since on such a basis the Koran rightly would be considered inspired in a Moslem country.

Similarly, it is hardly enough to say that one’s family has always believed in the Bible, “and that’s good enough for me”. It may indeed be good enough for the person disinclined to think, and one should not disparage a simple faith, even if held for an ultimately weak reason, but mere custom cannot establish the inspiration of the Bible.

Some fundamentalists say they believe the Bible is inspired because it is

“inspirational”, but that is a word with a double meaning. On the one hand, if used in the strict theological sense, it clearly begs the question, which is: How do we know the Bible is inspired, that is, “written” by God, but through human authors? And if “inspirational” means nothing more than “inspiring” or “moving”, then someone with a deficient poetic sense might think the works of a poetaster are inspired.

Parts of the Bible, including several whole books of the Old Testament, cannot be called “inspirational” in this sense in the least, unless one works on the principle of the elderly woman who was soothed every time she heard “the blessed word Mesopotamia”.³ One betrays no disrespect in admitting that some parts of the Bible are as dry as military statistics—indeed, some parts *are* nothing but military statistics—and there is little there that can move the emotions.

So, it is not enough to believe in the inspiration of the Bible merely out of culture or habit, nor is it enough to believe in its inspiration because it is a beautifully written or emotion-stirring book. There are other religious books, and even some plainly secular ones, that outscore most of the Bible when it comes to fine prose or poetry.

What about the Bible’s own claim to inspiration? There are not many places where such a claim is made even tangentially, and most books in the Old and New Testaments make no such claim at all. In fact, no New Testament writer seemed to be aware that he was writing under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, with the exception of the author of Revelation. Besides, even if every biblical book began with the phrase “the following is an inspired book”, such phrases would prove nothing. The Koran claims to be inspired, as does the Book of Mormon, as do the holy books of various Eastern religions. Even the writings of Mary Baker Eddy, founder of Christian Science, claim inspiration. The mere claim of inspiration is insufficient to establish a book’s bona fides.

These tests failing, most fundamentalists fall back on the notion that “the Holy Spirit tells me the Bible is inspired”, an exercise in subjectivism that is akin to their claim that the Holy Spirit guides them in interpreting the text. For example, the anonymous author of *How Can I Understand the Bible?* a booklet distributed by the Radio Bible Class, lists twelve rules for Bible study. The first is “seek the help of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit has been given to illumine the Scriptures and make them alive to you as you study them. Yield to his enlightenment.” If one takes this as meaning that anyone asking

for a proper interpretation will be given one by God—and that is exactly how many fundamentalists understand the assistance of the Holy Spirit to work—then the multiplicity of interpretations, even among fundamentalists, should give people a gnawing sense that the Holy Spirit has not been doing his job very effectively.

Most fundamentalists do not say, in so many words, that the Holy Spirit has spoken to them directly, assuring them of the inspiration of the Bible. They do not phrase it like that. Rather, in reading the Bible they are “convicted” that it is the word of God, they get a positive “feeling” that it is inspired, and that’s that—which often reduces their acceptance of the Bible to culture or habit. No matter how it is looked at, the fundamentalist’s position is not one that is rigorously reasoned to. It must be the rare fundamentalist who, even for sake of argument, first approaches the Bible as though it is not inspired and then, on reading it, syllogistically concludes it is. In fact, fundamentalists begin with the fact of inspiration—just as they take the other doctrines of fundamentalism as givens, not as deductions—and then they find things in the Bible that seem to support inspiration, claiming, with circular reasoning, that the Bible confirms its inspiration, which they knew all along.

The man who wrestles with the fundamentalist approach to inspiration at length is unsatisfied because he knows he has no good grounds for his belief. The Catholic position is the only one, ultimately, that can satisfy the intellect. The Catholic method of finding the Bible to be inspired begins this way. The Bible is approached as any other ancient work. It is not, at first, presumed to be inspired. From textual criticism we are able to conclude that we have a text the accuracy of which is more certain than the accuracy of any other ancient work.

Sir Frederic Kenyon notes that

[f]or all the works of classical antiquity we have to depend on manuscripts written long after their original composition. The author who is the best case in this respect is Virgil, yet the earliest manuscript of Virgil that we now possess was written some 350 years after his death. For all other classical writers, the interval between the date of the author and the earliest extant manuscript of his works is much greater. For Livy it is about 500 years, for Horace 900, for most of Plato 1,300, for Euripides 1,600.⁴

Yet no one seriously disputes that we have accurate copies of the works of these writers. Not only are the biblical manuscripts we have older than those for classical authors, we have in absolute numbers far more manuscripts to work from. Some are whole books of the Bible, others fragments of just a

few words, but there are thousands of manuscripts in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Coptic, Syriac, and other languages. What this means is that we can be sure we have an accurate text, and we can work from it in confidence.

Next we take a look at what the Bible, considered merely as a history, tells us, particularly the New Testament, and particularly the Gospels. We examine the account of Jesus' life and death and his reported Resurrection. Using what is in the Gospels themselves, what we find in extrabiblical writings from the early centuries, and what we know of human nature (and what we can otherwise, from natural theology, know of divine nature), we conclude that Jesus either was just what he claimed to be, God, or was a madman, (The one thing we know he could not have been was merely a good man who was not God, because no merely good man would make the claims he made.)

We are able to eliminate his being a madman not just from what he said—no madman ever spoke as he did; for that matter, no sane man ever did either—but from what his followers did after his death, A hoax (the supposedly empty tomb) is one thing, but one does not find people dying for a hoax, at least not one from which they have no prospect of advantage. The result of this line of reasoning is that we must conclude that Jesus indeed rose from the dead and that he was therefore God and, being God, meant what he said and did what he said he would do.

One thing he said he would do was found a Church, and from both the Bible (still taken as merely a historical book, not at this point in the argument as an inspired one) and other ancient works, we see that Christ established a Church with the rudiments of all we see in the Catholic Church today—papacy, hierarchy, priesthood, sacraments, teaching authority, and, as a consequence of the last, infallibility. Christ's Church, to do what he said it would do, had to have the note of infallibility.

We thus have taken purely historical material and concluded that there exists a Church, which is the Catholic Church, divinely protected against teaching error. Now we are at the last part of the argument. That Church tells us the Bible is inspired, and we can take the Church's word for it precisely because the Church is infallible. Only after having been told by a properly constituted authority (that is, one set up by God to assure us of the truth of matters of faith) that the Bible is inspired do we begin to use it as an inspired book.

Here is how Arnold Lunn put it in a 1932 letter to C. E. M. Joad:

We now approach the Bible, and approach it in the same spirit as that in which we should approach any other human document. We do not believe the Bible merely because it is the Bible, but because we are convinced of its veracity by rational inferences similar in kind to those which convince us of other historical facts. We do not, for instance, accept the fact that Christ rose from the dead merely because we find the Resurrection recorded in the Gospels; we accept the Resurrection because, of all theories which have been put forward to explain the origin of Christianity, the only theory which fits all the facts is the theory that Jesus of Nazareth claimed to be God and proved his claim by rising from the dead. . . . The Roman Catholic, then, claims to prove from the Bible, which he is still treating as a purely human document, that Christ intended to found an infallible Church. Where, then, is this Church? The Roman Catholic Church alone possesses, so the Catholic believes, all the “notes” which enable us to distinguish between the Church which Christ founded and its heretical rivals. The Catholic claims to prove by pure reason that Christ was God, that Christ founded an infallible Church, and that the Roman Catholic Church is the church in question. Having travelled thus far by reason unaided by authority, it is not irrational to trust the authority, whose credentials have been proved by reason, to interpret difficult passages in the Bible.⁵

Note that this is not a circular argument. We are not basing the inspiration of the Bible on the Church’s infallibility and the Church’s infallibility on the word of an inspired Bible. That indeed would be a circular argument.

What we have is really a spiral argument. On the first level we argue to the reliability of the Bible as history. From that we conclude an infallible Church was founded. Then we take the word of that infallible Church that the Bible is inspired. It reduces to the proposition that, without the existence of the Church, we could not tell if the Bible were inspired. As Augustine said, “I would not believe in the Gospel if the authority of the Catholic Church did not move me to do so.”⁶

What has just been discussed is not, obviously, the kind of mental exercise people go through before putting trust in the Bible, but it is the only truly reasonable way to do so. Every other way is inferior—psychologically adequate, perhaps, but actually inferior. In mathematics we accept on “faith” that one and one make two and that one, when added to any integer, will produce the next-highest integer. These truths seem elementary to us, and we are satisfied to take such things at face value, but apprentice mathematicians must go through a semester’s course the whole of which is taken up demonstrating such “obvious” truths. Fundamentalists are quite right in believing the Bible is inspired, but their *reasons* for so believing are inadequate because knowledge of the inspiration of the Bible can be based only on an authority established by God to tell us the Bible is inspired, and that authority is the Church.

Here a more serious problem enters. It seems to some that it makes little

difference why one believes in the Bible's inspiration, just so one believes in it. But the basis for one's belief in its inspiration directly affects how one goes about interpreting the Bible. The Catholic believes in inspiration because the Church tells him so—that is putting it bluntly—and that same Church has the authority to interpret the inspired text. Fundamentalists believe in inspiration, although on weak grounds, but they have no interpreting authority other than themselves.

Newman put it this way in an essay on inspiration published in 1884:

Surely then, if the revelations and lessons in Scripture are addressed to us personally and practically, the presence among us of a formal judge and standing expositor of its words, is imperative. It is antecedently unreasonable to suppose that a book so complex, so unsystematic, in parts so obscure, the outcome of so many minds, times, and places, should be given us from above without the safeguard of some authority; as if it could possibly, from the nature of the case, interpret itself. Its inspiration does but guarantee its truth, not its interpretation. How are private readers satisfactorily to distinguish what is didactic and what is historical, what is fact and what is vision, what is allegorical and what is literal, what is idiomatic and what is grammatical, what is enunciated formally and what occurs *obiter*, what is only of temporary and what is of lasting obligation? Such is our natural anticipation, and it is only too exactly justified in the events of the last three centuries, in the many countries where private judgment on the text of Scripture has prevailed. The gift of inspiration requires as its complement the gift of infallibility.⁷

J. Derek Holmes emphasizes that

[t]hroughout his argument Newman never ignored the main point, that since the writing was irregular, inconsistent, or incomplete, it was antecedently highly improbable that it would contain the whole of the revealed Word of God. The Bible did not contain a complete secular history, and there was no reason why it should contain a complete account of religious truth. It was unreasonable to demand an adequate scriptural foundation for Church doctrines, if the impression gained from the Bible was of writers who took solemn and sacred truths for granted and who did not give a complete or full treatment of the sense of revelation. The writings did not reflect all the beliefs of the writer and events were often presented without comment or moral implication.⁸

Fundamentalists' understanding of inspiration directly affects the way they interpret the Bible and the doctrines they discover in it. Many—not all those writing treatises, but some of them and certainly many in the pews—subscribe to what reduces to a dictation theory of inspiration. This is unfortunate, because “a ‘dictation’ theory may seem a natural account of some experiences of the prophets, but it is psychologically incredible when applied to St. Luke writing his prologue or St. Paul writing to Philemon.”⁹ A

suggestion of the troubles faced by fundamentalists who subscribe to the dictation theory or its practical equivalents comes in passages such as 1 Corinthians 1:14-16. Here is what Paul writes: “Thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius; so that no one can say it was in my name you were baptized. (Yes, and I did baptize the household of Stephanas; I do not know that I baptized anyone else.)” Under the dictation theory, with Paul simply transcribing what God whispered in his ear, one would have to conclude God temporarily forgot who it was Paul baptized. Other examples could be given to show that inspiration is more subtle than many people suspect.

Here is another problem. How does one, on fundamentalist terms, decide when more than one interpretation of a particular passage is allowable and when only one can be admitted? The Catholic Church is silent on the proper interpretation of many biblical passages, readers being allowed to accept one of several understandings.

Take, as an example, Jonah’s escapade at sea, which readers often find disturbing. Ronald Knox said “no defender of the sense of Scripture ever pretended, surely, that this was a natural event. If it happened, it was certainly a miracle; and not to my mind a more startling miracle than the raising of Lazarus, in which I take it Catholics are certainly bound to believe. Surely what puts one off the story of Jonah is the element of the *grotesque* which is present in it.”¹⁰ Actually, what happened to Jonah can be looked at three ways, one of which relies on nothing miraculous occurring at all.

The most common interpretation nowadays, and one that is held by indubitably orthodox exegetes, is that the story of the prophet being swallowed and then disgorged by a “great fish” is merely didactic fiction, a grand tale told to establish a religious point. Catholics are perfectly free to take this or a more literal view, but one seldom will find a fundamentalist who thinks of Jonah as allegory or anything of that sort, although he really has no *authority* for opting for one interpretation over another.

Strictly literal interpretations of what happened to Jonah actually come in two forms. One relies on the fact that people apparently have been swallowed by whales and lived to talk about it. In 1891 a seaman, James Bartley, from a ship named the *Star of the East*, was found missing after an eighty-foot sperm whale had been caught. He was presumed drowned. The next day, when the crew cut up the whale, Bartley was discovered alive inside.¹¹ If Jonah’s three days in the whale were counted like Christ’s three days in the tomb, after the

Semitic fashion—that is, parts of three distinct days, but perhaps only slightly more than twenty-four hours total—then it is possible that Jonah could have been coughed up by that great fish just as his story says. This would be a purely natural explanation of the episode.

The other literal interpretation is that Jonah indeed underwent what the story, read as straight history, says he did, but survived only because of a positive miracle, and several different sorts of miracles have been suggested, such as suspended animation on Jonah's part or a fish with a remarkably large air supply and decidedly mild gastric juices.

Related to the problem of inspiration is the problem of the canon of Scripture. What books constitute the Bible? Catholics can repair to the decisions of the Church, most clearly formalized at Trent and at the fourth-century councils at Hippo and Carthage; these produced lists of books that are to be accepted as inspired on the authority of the infallible Church. Inspired books, taken together, form the Bible. That is the Catholic way to answer the question. What does a fundamentalist fall back on?

William G. Most discusses the rather surprising comments made in 1910 by Gerald Birney Smith, professor at the University of Chicago and speaker at that year's Baptist Congress. As Most says, "Smith's frankness was really remarkable. He reviewed every way he knew to determine which books are or are not inspired" and thus to be included in the canon.

Smith explained that "Luther proposed a practical test. . . . The distinction which he actually had in mind was between those writings which have the power to bring men the assurance of forgiveness through Christ and those which have no such power." Luther was of course relying on his doctrine of salvation by faith alone (not, as Paul would have it, salvation by faith, which is a different thing, implying faith is a prerequisite for salvation but by itself insufficient), "Luther thought a book that intensely preaches this doctrine was inspired", explains Most, "otherwise not. Of course, he never provided proof for such a standard. Nor could it be a standard, for Luther, or any other writer, could compose a book that would preach according to Luther's requirements; yet that book need not on that account be inspired."

Smith, continuing his analysis of the Protestant basis for determining the canon, noted that John Calvin, in his *Institutes*, offered a different test: "The word will never gain credit in the hearts of men till it be confirmed by the internal testimony of the Spirit," This claim, too—relying on subjective "feelings"—was useless, Smith said, referring to the assaults on the Bible that

were prevalent even a long lifetime ago. “The application of this test. . . would eliminate the existing distinction between canonical and non-canonical writings more completely than would the most radical conclusions of biblical criticism.” After all, many parts of Scripture do not seem uplifting at all, such as 1 and 2 Chronicles, also known as 1 and 2 Paralipomenon, which, like much of Numbers and Deuteronomy, are dull—not the style of writing that shouts, “I’m inspired!” And some clearly noncanonical and thus noninspired books such as Thomas a Kempis’ *Imitation of Christ* are more moving than many whole books of the Bible.

Most notes that “what Professor Smith demonstrates is that for a Protestant there simply is no way to know which books are inspired. That means, in practice, that a Protestant, if he is logical, should not appeal to Scripture to prove anything; he has no sure: means of knowing which books are part of Scripture!”¹²

One consequence of this inability to ascertain the canon has been that the Protestant Bible is an incomplete Bible. Missing are the books of Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, and the two books of Maccabees, as well as sections of Esther (10:4 to 16:24) and Daniel (3:24-90 and chapters 13 and 14). These are known to Catholics as the deuterocanonical works. They are just as much a part of the Bible as the rest of the Old Testament, the proto-canonical books. Luther rejected the deuterocanonical books and passages largely because they conflicted with his theological theories. In 2 Maccabees 12:46, for instance, it is said that “it is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins”—a reference to purgatory. Such a book had to go—it did not mesh with the Reformer’s doctrines. (Luther even spoke disparagingly about some New Testament books, such as James, but he was unable to find a rationale for removing them from the canon.)

However easy it may have been for the Reformers to say that some books are inspired and thus in the canon, while others are not, they in fact had no solid grounds for making such determinations. Ultimately, an infallible authority is needed if we are to know what belongs in the Bible and what does not. Without such an authority, we are left to our own prejudices, and we cannot tell if our prejudices lead us in the right direction.

The advantages of the Catholic approach to proving inspiration are two. First, the inspiration is really proved, not just “felt”. Second, the main fact behind the proof—the fact of an infallible, teaching Church—leads one

naturally to an answer to the problem that troubled the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:31): How is one to know what interpretations are right? The same Church that authenticates the Bible, that establishes its inspiration, is the authority set up by Christ to interpret his word.

Chapter 10

Tradition Versus “Traditions of Men”

Fundamentalists say the Bible is the sole rule of faith. Everything one needs to believe to be saved is in the Bible, and nothing needs to be added to the Bible. The whole of Christian truth is found within its pages. Anything extraneous to the Bible is simply wrong or hinders rather than helps one toward salvation.

Catholics, on the other hand, say the Bible is not the sole rule of faith and that nothing in the Bible suggests it was meant to be. In fact, the Bible indicates it is not to be taken by itself. The true rule of faith is Scripture and Tradition, as manifested in the living teaching authority of the Catholic Church, to which were entrusted the oral teachings of Jesus and the apostles plus the authority to interpret Scripture rightly.

Vatican II explained the relationship between Tradition and Scripture this way:

Hence there exist a close connection and communication between sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture. For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end. For sacred Scripture is the word of God inasmuch as it is consigned to writing under the inspiration of the divine Spirit. To the successors of the apostles, sacred Tradition hands on in its full purity God's word, which was entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. Thus, by the light of the Spirit of truth, these successors can in their preaching preserve this word of God faithfully, explain it, and make it more widely known. Consequently it is not from sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. Therefore both sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same devotion and reverence.¹

The fundamentalist side usually begins its argument by citing two verses. The first is this: “So much has been written down, that you may learn to believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and so believing find life through his name” (Jn 20:31). The other is this: “Everything in the scripture has been divinely inspired, and it has its uses; to instruct us, to expose our errors, to correct our faults, to educate in holy living” (2 Tim 3:17). Fundamentalists say these verses demonstrate the reality of *sola scriptura*.

Not so, reply Catholics. The verse from John's Gospel tells us only that the Bible was composed so we can be helped to believe Jesus is the Messiah. It does not say the Bible is all we need for salvation, nor does it say the Bible is actually needed to believe in Christ. After all, the earliest Christians had no New Testament to appeal to; they learned from oral, not written, instruction. Until relatively recent times, the Bible was inaccessible to most people, either because they could not read or because printing had not yet been invented. All these people learned from oral instruction, passed down, generation to generation, by the Church. Granted, it would have been advantageous for them to have the Bible at hand also, but it was not necessary for their salvation.

Much the same can be said about 2 Timothy 3:17. To say that all inspired writing "has its uses" is one thing; to say that such a remark means that only inspired *writing* need be followed is something else. Besides, there is a telling argument against the fundamentalists' claim. It is the contradiction that arises out of their own interpretation of this verse. John Henry Newman explained it this way:

It is quite evident that this passage furnishes no argument whatever that the Sacred Scripture, without Tradition, is the *sole rule of faith*; for, although Sacred Scripture is *profitable* for these four ends, still it is not said to be *sufficient*. The Apostle requites the aid of Tradition (2 Thess 2:15). Moreover, the Apostle here refers to the Scriptures which Timothy was taught in his infancy. Now, a good part of the New Testament was not written in his boyhood: some of the Catholic Epistles were not written even when St. Paul wrote this, and none of the Books of the New Testament were then placed on the canon of the Scripture books. He refers, then, to the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and if the argument from this passage proved anything, it would prove too much, viz., that the Scriptures of the New Testament were not necessary for a rule of faith.²

The Bible actually denies that it is the complete rule of faith. John tells us that not everything concerning Christ's work is in Scripture (Jn 21:25), and Paul says that much Christian teaching is to be found in the tradition that is handed down by word of mouth (2 Tim 2:2). He instructs us to "stand fast, and hold the traditions which you have learned, whether by word or by our epistle" (2 Th 2:15). We are told that the first Christians "were persevering in the doctrine of the apostles" (Acts 2:42), which was the oral teaching that was given long before the New Testament was written—and centuries before the canon of the New Testament was settled.

This oral teaching must be accepted by Christians as they accepted the written teaching that at length came to them. "He who listens to you, listens

to me; he who despises you, despises me” (Lk 10:16). The Church, in the persons of the apostles, was given the authority to teach by Christ; the Church would be his stand-in. “Go, therefore, making disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19). How was this to be done? By preaching, by oral instruction: “See how faith comes from hearing, and hearing through Christ’s word” (Rom 10:17). The Church would always be available as the living teacher. It is a mistake to limit Christ’s word to the written word only or to suggest that all his teachings were reduced to writing. The Bible nowhere supports either notion.

After all, God, speaking through Isaiah, promised a living voice in the Church that Christ would establish: “This is my covenant with them, says the Lord: My spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, nor out of the mouth of your children, nor out of the mouth of your children’s children, says the Lord, from now until forever” (Is 59:21). This prophecy must refer to a living Church, the culmination of Israel, and not to a book because no book, not even the Bible, is a living teacher.

The oral teaching would last until the end of time. “But the word of the Lord lasts forever. And this word is nothing other than the Gospel which has been preached to you” (1 Pet 1:25). Note that the word has been “preached”—that is, it was oral. This would endure. It would not be supplanted by a written record like the Bible (supplemented, yes, but not supplanted), but would continue to have its own authority.

In this discussion it is important to keep in mind what the Catholic Church means by Tradition. The term does not mean legends or mythological accounts, nor does it mean transitory customs or practices that come and go as circumstances warrant, such as styles of priestly dress, particular forms of devotion to saints, or even liturgical rubrics. Tradition means the teachings and teaching authority of Jesus and, derivatively, the apostles. These have been handed down and entrusted to the Church (which means to its official teachers, the bishops in union with the Pope). It is necessary that Christians believe in and follow this Tradition as well as the Bible (Lk 10:16). The truth of the faith has been given primarily to the leaders of the Church (Eph 3:5), who, with Christ, form the foundation of the Church (Eph 2:20). The Church has been guided by the Holy Spirit, who protects this teaching from corruption (Jn 14:16),

Paul illustrated what Tradition is: “The chief message I handed on to you,

as it was handed on to me, was that Christ, as the scriptures foretold, died for our sins. . . . That is our preaching, mine or theirs as you will; that is the faith that has come to you” (1 Cor 15:3, 11). He said also, to Timothy, who was a bishop, “Thou hast learned, from many who can witness to it, the doctrine which I hand down; give it into the keeping of men thou canst trust, men who will know how to teach it to others besides themselves” (2 Tim 2:2). In other words, Timothy, one of the successors to the apostles, was to teach what he had learned from his predecessor, Paul. The apostle praised those who followed Tradition: “I must praise you for your constant memory of me, for upholding your traditions just as I handed them on to you” (1 Cor 11:2).

The first Christians “occupied themselves continually with the apostles’ teaching” (Acts 2:42) long before there was a Bible. The fullness of Christian teaching was found, right from the first, in the Church as the living embodiment of Christ, not in a book. The teaching Church, with its oral traditions, was authoritative. Paul himself gives a quotation from Jesus that was handed down orally to him: “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). This saying is not found in the Gospels and must have been passed on to Paul. Indeed, even the Gospels themselves are oral Tradition that has been written down (Lk 1:1-4). What is more, Paul does not quote Jesus only. He also quotes from early Christian hymns, as in Ephesians 5:14. These and other things have been given to Christians “by the command of the Lord Jesus” (1 Th 4:2).

Fundamentalists have objections to all of this, of course. They say Jesus condemned Tradition. They note that Jesus said, “Why is it that you yourselves violate the commandment of God with your traditions?” (Mt 15:3). Paul warned, “Take care not to let anyone cheat you with his philosophizings, with empty phantasies drawn from human tradition, from worldly principles; they were never Christ’s teaching” (Col 2:8). But these verses merely condemn erroneous human traditions, not truths that were handed down orally and entrusted to the Church. These truths are part of what is known as Tradition (with an upper-case “T”, to distinguish it from lower-case human traditions or customs).

Consider Matthew 15:6-9, which fundamentalists often bring up: “So by these traditions of yours you have made God’s laws ineffectual. You hypocrites, it was a true prophecy that Isaiah made of you, when he said, This people does me honor with its lips, but its heart is far from me. Their worship is in vain, for the doctrines they teach are the commandments of men,” At

first glance, this seems to undercut the Catholic position, but look at the context. Jesus was not here condemning all traditions. He condemned only those that made God's word void. In this case, it was a matter of the Pharisees making a pretended dedication of their goods to the Temple so they could avoid using them to support their aged parents. By doing this, they dodged the commandment to "Honor thy father and thy mother" (Ex 20:12).

Elsewhere, Jesus instructed his followers to abide by traditions that are not contrary to God's commandments. "The scribes and the Pharisees, he said, have established themselves in the place from which Moses used to teach; do what they tell you, then, continue to observe what they tell you, but do not imitate their actions, for they tell you one thing and do another" (Mt 23:2-3).

He told the Pharisees that they were hypocrites who "will award to God his tithe, though it be of mint or dill or cummin, and have forgotten the weightier commandments of the law, justice, mercy, and honor; you did ill to forget one duty while you performed the other" (Mt 23:23). In short, Jesus insisted we should follow all legitimate traditions. In all these cases he was referring to traditions in the sense of customs (lower-case tradition), not to Tradition in the sense of the Church's teaching authority (upper-case). The latter is wider than the former and includes it.

The big problem, no doubt, is determining what constitutes authentic Tradition. How do we know that what had been handed down by the Catholic Church is correct doctrine and practice? We know it is correct because Christ promised that the gates of hell would not prevail against the Church. (Mt 16:18), The Church would be indefectible; its official teaching would be infallible. To it, through Peter, Christ gave his own teaching authority (Mt 16:19; 28:18-20).

Under the Old Covenant, it was said, "The lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at this mouth" (Malachi 2:7), Under the New Covenant, Christ sent his Church to teach men and transferred to it the authority the priests of the Old Covenant had. We find Philip the deacon asking the Ethiopian, who was reading Scripture, "Canst thou understand what thou art reading?" The Ethiopian replied, "How could I . . . without someone to guide me?" (Acts 8:30-31). We are reminded that "no prophecy in Scripture is the subject of private interpretation" (2 Pet 1:20). The Bible, while meant to be read by individual Christians, indicates that a divinely appointed guide is needed to get through treacherous passages, of which there are many.

“But the Bible itself says it is the sole rule of faith!” insist fundamentalists. They quote John 5:39, in which it is said, “search the scriptures”, but they do not take the phrase in context. They imagine it to be a command to the reader: “Get your Bible and verify that all Christian truths can be discovered in the plain sense of the text.” That is not what Jesus was saying. He was rebuking disbelieving Jews, not claiming that the Bible is the sole rule of faith. Jesus was pointing out to the Pharisees that the messianic prophecies were fulfilled in him. “If you read Scripture, you can verify this for yourselves!” He was referring to a single theme. This verse cannot be stretched to mean that all religious truth can be found on the surface of the Bible.

Fundamentalists also cite Acts 17:11, which refers to the Bereans, who “welcomed the word with all eagerness, and examined the scriptures, day after day, to find out whether all this was true”. Again, here is a verse taken out of context. What really happened is that these people first had been taught Christianity orally and now checked to see if its claims matched the Old Testament prophecies. The verse does not at all mean one uses the Bible as a checklist for all Christian doctrines. (If it meant that, there would be, again, the problem Newman brought up, that the Old Testament *alone* would be sufficient as a rule of faith, the New Testament unnecessary.)

What fundamentalists often do, unfortunately, is see the word “tradition” in Matthew 15:3 or Colossians 2:8 or elsewhere and conclude that anything termed a “tradition” is to be rejected. They forget that the term is used in a different sense, as in 2 Thessalonians 2:15, to describe what *should* be believed. Jesus did not condemn all traditions; he condemned only erroneous traditions, whether doctrines or practices, that undercut Christian truths. The rest, as the apostles taught, were to be adhered to.

The notion of *sola scriptura* arose when the Reformers rejected the papacy. In doing that they also rejected the teaching authority of the Church. They looked elsewhere for the rule of faith and thought they found it in the Bible. Really, they had no place else to look. By default, the interpretation of the Bible would be left to the individual, as guided by the Holy Spirit.

In theory this may sound fine, but it has not worked well in practice, and that argues against the truth of the theory. Actually, both reason and experience tell us the Bible could not have been intended as each man’s private guide to the truth. If individual guidance by the Holy Spirit were a reality, each Christian would understand the same thing from any particular verse since God cannot teach error. Yet Christians have understood

contradictory things from Scripture—even Christians whose “born-again” experiences cannot be doubted. Indeed, fundamentalists often differ among themselves on what the Bible means. They may agree on most major points, but the frequency and vehemence of their squabbles on lesser matters, which should be just as clear if the Holy Spirit is enlightening them, prove the sacred text cannot explain itself.

Chapter 11

Development of Doctrine

The opening verse of Hebrews reminds us that “in the old days, God spoke to our fathers in many ways and by many means”. This was done, the Greek implies, fragmentarily and under various figures. Man was not handed religious truth as though from a Scholastic theologian, neatly laid out and indexed. There was no antediluvian equivalent of the *Baltimore Catechism*. Doctrines had to be thought out, lived out, even pieced together, over centuries, the great leaps coming through new revelations.

Most fundamentalists will acknowledge that much. They admit there was a real development in doctrine: an initial message, which became clouded, nearly lost, at the Fall, and then progressively fuller explications as God prepared Israel for the Messiah, until finally the apostles were instructed by the Messiah himself. Gregory the Great put it like this: “With the progress of the times the knowledge of the spiritual fathers increased; for, in the science of God, Moses was more instructed than Abraham, the prophets more than Moses, the apostles more than the prophets.”¹

With Christ and the apostles general revelation ended. The clear teaching of the Bible is that after the death of the last apostle no further revelation is to be made.² Christ was the fulfillment of the law of the Old Testament (Mt 5:17) and the ultimate teacher of humanity: “You have one teacher, Christ” (Mt 23:10). The apostles recognized that their task was to pass on, perfectly intact, the faith given to them by the Master: “Thou hast learned, from many who can witness to it, the doctrine which I hand down; give it into the keeping of men thou canst trust, men who will know how to teach it to others besides themselves” (2 Tim 2:2); “It is for thee to hold fast to the doctrine handed on to thee, the charge committed to thee” (2 Tim 3:14).

Keeping to the teaching of the apostles, the Fathers rejected the claims of heretics, such as the Gnostics, to possess secret doctrines or a new revelation. Irenaeus and Tertullian stressed that the fullness of revelation is contained in the doctrines of the apostles, doctrines that are preserved unfalsified through

the succession of bishops. This is not to say that there is not a true progress in the understanding of what has been entrusted to the Church. One cannot prevent men from drawing true inferences from true doctrines. Anyone with a serious interest in Christianity will ask, What does this doctrine imply? How does it relate to that doctrine? How can it be squared with this other belief? How does it relate to changed conditions in the world, to things that were not even dreamt of when the last of the Twelve died? In short, how is any doctrine to be understood, what does a true understanding imply, and what does it exclude?

In answering these questions, the Church develops—we perhaps can say “matures”—doctrines, but it does not alter their essence. It is not a matter of inventing new beliefs, but of clearing up obscurities regarding old ones. Vincent of Lerins, in about 450, explained it this way: “But perhaps someone is saying, Will there then be no progress of religion in the Church of Christ? Certainly there is, and the greatest. . . . But it is truly progress and not a change of faith. What is meant by progress is that something is brought to an advancement within itself; by change, that something is transformed from one thing into another.”³

The fathers of Vatican II explained development in this fashion:

The tradition which comes from the apostles develops in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. For there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down. This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers, who treasure these things in their hearts (Luke 2:19, 51), through the intimate understanding of spiritual things they experience, and through the preaching of those who have received through episcopal succession the sure gift of truth. For, as the centuries succeed one another, the Church constantly moves forward toward the fullness of divine truth until the words of God reach their complete fulfillment in her.⁴

Thomas Aquinas noted that truths that were at one time only implicitly believed are later expressly proposed for belief.⁵ An example of this—an example to which he could not, of course, have had recourse—is the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. It was talked about for centuries and then, at what seemed the opportune moment, formally defined. At any one time, the student of theological history will find, there were more articles to be believed than there had been at any earlier time, but fewer than there were to be later. Clarity is added, but never subtracted. As the world grows old, we have the comfort of more doctrinal security (if we but ask for it) than did our ancestors. This growth in doctrine comes about in various ways. Sometimes it

arises from the prayerful thinking of theologians and appears as the result of obscure disputations or forgotten essays in forgotten journals. More usually it is a matter of old truths being made clearer to avoid misunderstanding or heresies being headed off at the pass.

Consider the doctrine of the Trinity. It is not present on the face of Scripture, not just in the sense that the word Trinity is never used—its first use was by Theophilus of Antioch in 181⁶—but also in the sense that it is by no means obvious, from the surface meaning of the text, that the Holy Spirit is a divine Person. We naturally read back into the Bible the beliefs we already hold, each of us having been instructed in the Faith before ever picking up the Bible. References to the Holy Spirit's divinity seem to jump out at us. If we imagine ourselves as ancient pagans or as present-day non-Christians, coming across the Bible for the first time, we realize that the status of the Holy Spirit is by no means clear. If we think of ourselves as having no recourse to divine Tradition and to the Magisterium of the Church, we can appreciate how easy it must have been for the early pneumatological heresies to arise.

Another example is transubstantiation. In the sixth chapter of John's Gospel the Eucharist is promised. If this chapter is read in conjunction with the accounts of the Last Supper, it is easy to see that the first Christians knew, from the very start, that the bread and wine were transformed into Christ's actual Body and Blood. Though attesting that such a transformation happens, the Bible is silent about *how* it happens. Little wonder, then, that in later years disputes arose concerning the way this mysterious change took place. (Perhaps the greatest wonder is that there was no serious opposition to the Real Presence at all until the writings of Berengarius of Tours, who lived in the eleventh century.)

Not until 1215, at the Fourth Lateran Council, was the term transubstantiation imposed, the imposition being not so much the addition of something new as the exclusion of various false explanations. This tongue twister was the only term that eliminated wrong (but seemingly right) explanations of the mystery, that gave equivocating opponents of it no room to hide. From the Gospels Christians knew that the Real Presence was real, and, had they given no thought at all to the matter for the succeeding twelve centuries, no definition would have been required at Lateran IV for the simple reason that no disputes would have arisen regarding what the doctrine really meant. But because people did put their minds to the matter, because

they did try to draw true inferences from true doctrines, and because not all of them were adept at that, disputes did arise, and a formal definition was necessary.

Another example. The Council of Nicaea responded to the most damaging ancient heresy, Arianism, by adopting the non-scriptural word *homoousios* (“same substance”) and contrasting it with *homoiousios* (“like substance”).⁷ Christ was of the same substance as the Father, not merely of a like substance—that is, he was himself divine, not just the most favored of creatures. The Church had come, finally, to a full, or at least a sufficiently full, understanding of Christology and was able to say authoritatively, “On this subject, the Bible and Tradition mean *this*.”

As these cases and innumerable others demonstrate, doctrinal questions can remain in a state of suspense for years. The Church has never felt the need to define formally what there has been no particular pressure to define. This strikes many, particularly non-Catholics, as odd. Why were things not cleared up in, say, the year 100 so folks could know what to believe? Why did Rome issue no laundry list of definitions in the early days and let it go at that? Why was no end run made around all these troubles that plagued Christianity precisely because things were unclear? The remote reason is that God has had his own timetable and an excellent rationale (to which we are not privy) for keeping to it. A more immediate reason is that Rome, meaning the Magisterium of the Church, could not define what it did not know. This returns us to the subjects of infallibility and inspiration. The Pope and the bishops, when teaching in union with him, are infallible in defining dogmas, but infallibility works only negatively. Papal *ex cathedra* pronouncements and ecumenical councils are, through the intervention of the Holy Spirit, prevented from teaching what is untrue, but they are not forced to teach what *is* true.

The Pope and the bishops are not inspired the way the authors of Scripture or the prophets were. To make a new definition, to clear up some dogmatic confusion, they first must use reason, operating on what is known to date, to be able to teach more precisely what is to be held as true. They cannot teach what they do not know, and they have no access to oracular shortcuts. The one great advantage they have over their ancient predecessors in the papacy and episcopacy, over theologians such as Augustine and Aquinas, is that they begin with a more clearly defined body of doctrine. Augustine did not have the advantage of a conciliar decree on transubstantiation; Aquinas could not

refer to one on papal infallibility. They could not very well reason *from* such formalized doctrines to the doctrines' natural implications, at least not in the way now possible. One cannot reach a legitimate conclusion unless the premises are first safe in hand, and if the premises are relatively few, conclusions, no matter how excellent, will also be few.

This chapter has gotten this far with hardly a word about charges by fundamentalists, but there has been a purpose in the delay. Fundamentalists' confusion can be perceived most readily if the Catholic position on doctrinal development is discussed first. Consider what Bill Jackson, head of Christians Evangelizing Catholics, says: "The Roman Catholic Church likens itself to a flower box in which many seeds have been planted. They are God's revelations to men; some have just come up, others are blossoming, etc. They claim these seeds were all planted by Christ, but that they develop at different times depending on the need of the Church." He argues that "the first error is saying Christ planted the seeds. Many important Roman Catholic doctrines have no scriptural basis—Immaculate Conception, Assumption, Purgatory, etc. The next error is to suppose that any need was not provided for the infant church. Paul said he preached the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). How could he, if some of God's truths were in seed form buried beneath the earth? Scripture was given by inspiration of God (2 Tim 3:16). He never changes; God's Truth never changes. Any development of doctrine is of human or satanic origin."⁸

Jackson thinks the Catholic Church believes in time-delayed revelation. Entirely new religious beliefs are just waiting to sprout—and will, as soon as Rome is properly watered. It is his flower-box analogy that leads Jackson astray. This analogy fundamentalists picked up from Catholic apologists. Catholics thought that by using it they were making doctrinal development clearer, but fundamentalists thought the analogy was an admission of something the Church does not in fact believe. The analogy, despite its seeming clarity, can lead one astray. It is, in fact, simply inadequate to explain doctrinal development.

Joseph Tixeront, referring to Catholic apologists in his *History of Dogmas*, put it like this: "Generally scholars have been too easily satisfied with vague formulas and mere comparisons, which are not precise enough (the child who becomes a man, the kernel that becomes a tree, etc.). For the question to be answered in a technical and adequate manner is this: When is an idea or a doctrine a mere development of another idea or doctrine, and when is it to be

considered a substantial alteration or transformation of it?”⁹ Frank Sheed had a similar thought when he wrote against using the shamrock as an explanation of the Trinity.¹⁰ The shamrock does not help us understand the doctrine, he said; it just helps us swallow it. And the analogy of seeds too easily permits fundamentalists to imagine the Catholic Church teaches that entirely new doctrines, unrelated to existing ones, are going to pop up at any time.

If Jackson misconstrues the Catholic position, at least he looks for it, which is more than can be said for most fundamentalists. He makes some effort to give the Catholic view. Like all fundamentalists, he finally falls back on the standard line, which is that what Catholics call doctrinal development is nothing more than a centuries-old accumulation of pagan beliefs and rites. The Catholic Church has not really refined the original deposit of faith; instead, it has added to it from the outside. In its hurry, particularly in the early centuries, to enlarge the membership rolls, it let just about anybody in the door—and when existing inducements were not enough, it adopted pagan ways to get pagans to “convert”. Each time the Church did this it moved further away from real Christianity.

As an example of this thinking, consider Christmas. Strict fundamentalists do not observe Christmas, and not only because the name of the feast is inescapably “Christ Mass”. Some say they disapprove of it because there is no proof Christ was born on December 25; they say he could not have been born then because the shepherds, who were in the fields with their sheep, did not put sheep into the fields during winter. Still others note the Bible is silent about the Feast of Christmas. But these are all prolegomena. The real reasons are that Christmas was established, quite indisputably, by the Catholic Church (which is bad enough) and that the Church superimposed this holy day on a pagan festival (which is worse). Connections are made to Chaldean and Babylonian worship, Zoroastrianism, even Anglo-Saxon rites. Santa Claus is unmasked as nothing but a commercialized version of Catholicism’s St. Nicholas. As Donald F. Maconaghie of the Conversion Center writes in a tract distributed to his mailing list, “No one who acknowledges the supreme authority of the Holy Scriptures to direct in all questions of doctrine and practice will have any fellowship in Xmas [*sic*] celebrations after his attention has been called to the matter, unless he does it deliberately in selfwill.”¹¹

Fundamentalists complain that the Church transformed pagan festivals into

Christian feasts, and such an association with paganism, they think, is conclusive proof of Rome's compromising. They quote with relish John Henry Newman's seemingly damaging admission:

We are told in various ways by Eusebius, that Constantine, in order to recommend the new religion to the heathen, transferred to it the outward ornaments to which they had been accustomed in their own. It is not necessary to go into a subject which the diligence of Protestant writers has made familiar to most of us. The use of temples, and these dedicated to particular saints, and ornamented on occasions with branches of trees; incense, lamps, and candles; votive offerings on recovery from illness; holy water; asylums; holydays and seasons, use of calendars, processions, blessings on the fields; sacerdotal vestments, the tonsure, the ring in marriage, turning to the East, images at a later date, perhaps the ecclesiastical chant, and the Kyrie Eleison, are all of pagan origin, and sanctified by their adoption into the Church.^{[12](#)}

Fundamentalists forget that even paganism had some truth mixed in with its error. Christianity took those elements of truth, removed erroneous associations so that they ceased to be pagan, and made use of the purified truth the better to express Christian notions. Christianity gave new meanings to old things, and in the process the pagan connections ceased. It was a matter of outright replacement, not compromise.

Another good, although strained, example of the fundamentalist attitude may be found in a sermon by the Rev. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, who says the problem with Rome "is not so much a matter of 'denial' of the truth, but rather such an addition to the truth that eventually it becomes a departure from it". To admittedly orthodox teachings "she 'adds,' with a damnable plus, things which are utterly unscriptural and which, indeed, become a denial of the Scripture". There follows a litany more hysterical than usual for fundamentalists, Lloyd-Jones going so far as to insist the Church "teaches her people to worship images" (most fundamentalists just say this is the natural result, although perhaps not the intent, of Church teachings). With respect to beliefs that are peculiarly Catholic, Lloyd-Jones says that "there is not a word about [them] in the New Testament". Part of his problem is that he thinks the Catholic Church teaches that "she has received 'continuing revelation' "—Bill Jackson's seeds again. "She does not believe, as true Protestants do, that revelation ended with what we have in the New Testament."^{[13](#)}

Give him partial points. It is true that Catholics do not think revelation ended with what is in the New Testament. They believe, though, that it ended with the death of the last apostle. The part of revelation that was not committed to writing—the part that is outside the New Testament and is the

oral teaching that is the basis of Tradition—*that* part of revelation Catholics also accept, and in this they follow the apostle Paul’s injunction: “Stand firm, then, brethren, and hold by the traditions you have learned, in word or in writing, from us” (2 Th 2:14). If Lloyd-Jones thinks the Church believes in a continuing revelation, he has not bothered to study the first chapter of any elementary theological work by a Catholic. Every discussion of revelation notes that revelation ended when the last apostle died. Lloyd-Jones’ trouble, the trouble of all fundamentalists, is that he labors under the misconception that Scripture has the last word and that the Tradition built on oral teaching counts for nothing.

One of the keenest arguments against the fundamentalists’ “Bible only” position was given by Newman in *Tract 85*, written while he was still an Anglican. This is the way J. M. Cameron summarizes Newman’s argument in his introduction to Newman’s *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*;

The argument is directed towards the Protestant critic of Tractarianism and in a simplified form goes like this. You criticize the Tractarians for teaching such doctrines as, for example, the Apostolic Succession of bishops or that the Eucharist is a sacrifice, and your criticism rests on the contention that these doctrines are not plainly and unambiguously contained in Scripture and may not indeed be in the Bible at all. I concede, goes the reply, that these doctrines are not to be found in the letter of Scripture or on its surface. But this is just as true of other doctrines you as an orthodox Protestant believe quite firmly; such doctrines as, let us say, the Godhead of the Holy Spirit or that Holy Scripture contains all that is sufficient for salvation. Neither of these doctrines is contained on the surface of Scripture, and there would even be logical difficulties in supposing that Scripture contained the latter doctrine. It seems to me that you ought in consistency to believe less than you do or more than you do. If you confine yourself to what is contained in Scripture then the content of your belief will be thin and even incoherent and you will have no rationale for giving the Bible this supreme position. What you do, inconsistently, believe (for you are not, thank God, a Unitarian) is a warrant for your going further and adopting as your criterion the tradition of the first few centuries and using this tradition, embodied in the formularies of the Church, as that in the light of which Scripture is to be read and understood. You must either move upwards into Catholicism or downwards into unbelief. There is no midway point of rest.¹⁴

Newman noted that, in any century, what was believed by the Catholic Church can be seen to be the logical and necessary outgrowth and the deeper understanding of what was believed the century before. Going backward, from the nineteenth century to the very early Middle Ages, is easy. No one really doubts that what was called the Catholic Church in 1845, when Newman wrote, was the same institution that took that name in, say, 845. (Newman wrote, of course, before the definitions of the Immaculate

Conception, papal infallibility, and the Assumption, three of the main “unscriptural” doctrines pointed at by fundamentalists, but his argument is just as valid, just as useful, today.)

The hard part concerns the early centuries, but, if one examines these in sequence, he sees a natural progression, a true growth in doctrine. There is no change of course, but a continuation along a single road. Something is clarified in one century, and in the next that clarification is investigated and built on so that a further clarification is produced. On and on it goes. What was determined with finality in the past is kept—there is no jettisoning of old doctrines for new—but fuller understandings are added. Thus, the few biblical references to Mary result in the splendid devotion to the Mother of God that was a hallmark of the medieval Church, best exemplified, perhaps, by the monument that is Notre Dame Cathedral.

Newman’s is not the final word on the development of doctrine, not by any means, but his is a tour de force that should be savored by anyone who wants to be able to give more than just a pat answer to fundamentalists who say today’s peculiarly Catholic doctrines have nothing to do with the beliefs of the early Church. His argument is too refined and too large to be used in regular apologetic work, but at least the book can be recommended to fundamentalists who are serious about learning how the Catholic Church views doctrinal development and to Catholics who want to savor fine prose and finer theological thinking. As in so many matters, there is no better teacher than Newman.

Chapter 12

Fanciful Histories of Catholicism

If few fundamentalists know the history of their own religion—and distressingly few do—even fewer have any appreciation for the history of the Catholic Church. They become easy prey for purveyors of fanciful histories that claim to account for the origin and advance of Catholicism. These histories take two basic forms. One makes the legalization of Christianity during the reign of the Emperor Constantine the determining fact; the other looks to the influence of the ancient mystery religions. Both conclude Catholicism is part Christian, part pagan, and wholly to be rejected.

The first version seems more like real history and is generally the more convincing, at least to readers with some schooling, while the second plays better to people who look for sensationalism and depends for its effect on superficial similarities between Catholicism and pagan cults.

The first, which might be called the “pagan convert” theory, begins, most commonly, with a listing of Catholic “inventions”. These are doctrines or practices that the Church allegedly adopted for the most part from paganism long after apostolic times. The first thing to notice is that in any list of “inventions” doctrines are mixed up with practices, fundamentalist writers apparently not understanding the difference.

A doctrine is a fixed belief, a dogma, such as (to limit it to peculiarly “Catholic” doctrines) the Immaculate Conception, the Assumption, purgatory, the sacraments, transubstantiation. Practices, on the other hand, are changeable. They are customs, ways of doing things. They include, for instance, rituals or dress or habits of prayer that may change over the years: the language of the Mass, the style of priestly vestments, the use or nonuse of incense during Mass, making the sign of the Cross. Of course, these practices are connected with doctrines, but they are not themselves doctrines. It is immaterial that many practices are present neither in the Bible nor in early Christian history. Practices are not the subject, of revelation, the way doctrines are; they are adopted as present needs require and are dropped for

the same reason.

To continue with the first kind of “history”: Fundamentalist writers begin by listing “inventions”, mixing doctrines and practices indiscriminately. They then assign dates of origin to them. They generally claim the “inventions” postdate the Edict of Milan, which was issued in 313 and made Christianity legal in the Roman Empire. This is the cutoff date, all the bad things in Catholicism supposedly arising after that point. In fact, the dating of the “inventions” is often grossly wrong or, where right, irrelevant to the point in question, which is: When did Catholicism begin?

For instance, transubstantiation is usually assigned to the Fourth Lateran Council, held in 1215. This, say fundamentalists, was when the doctrine was “invented”. Wrong. This was when the technical term “transubstantiation” was settled on as the right term to use to describe the doctrine of the Real Presence, which, in the writings of the Fathers of the Church, can be shown to antedate Constantine’s reign. In fact, the doctrine can be proved from John 6. So, the year 1215 *does* concern transubstantiation, but it is not the date when the doctrine underlying the term was first believed.

After presenting a list of “inventions”, anti-Catholic writers cite John Henry Newman’s admission, quoted in the previous chapter, that many Catholic customs are of pagan origin,¹ What Newman said is quite true, naturally, and merely demonstrates that some kinds of Catholic practices are common to many liturgical religions. By the way, it is worth pointing out that fundamentalist writers usually misquote this passage from Newman; for instance, they tend to leave out “the ring in marriage”. After all, giving rings in marriage is something they do in their own churches, and they do not want to be reminded that the practice is pagan in origin, as are other elements of their wedding ceremonies.

After listing the “inventions” and quoting Newman, the fundamentalist writers get to history proper. They say that until the reign of Constantine, all was well with Christianity. It remained essentially intact, although there were a few minor heresies in the three centuries following Pentecost. The early Christians, they say, took the Bible alone as their guide. They were not Protestants, and they were certainly not Catholics. They were just Christians. They faced persecution, first from the Jews, later from the Roman Empire. The persecution ended when, through the Edict of Milan, Constantine legalized Christianity.

It was either then or, decades later, when Christianity was made the official

religion of the Empire that, as Loraine Boettner phrased it,

thousands of people who still were pagans pressed into the church in order to gain special advantages and favors that went with such membership. They came in in far greater numbers than could be instructed or assimilated. Having been used to the more elaborate pagan rituals, they were not satisfied with the simple Christian worship but began to introduce their heathen beliefs and practices. Gradually, through the neglect of the Bible and the ignorance of the people, more and more heathen ideas were introduced until the church became more heathen than Christian.²

But there were still “real” Christians, few in number, often in hiding, who kept the Faith through the centuries, until, at the Reformation, they gained a certain ascendancy. The spiritual heirs of these people are today’s fundamentalists.

This outline of ecclesiastical history, as given by Boettner and others, depends for its support on several things. The most important is dating. The theory is that all was well with the Church until Constantine gave it political preference. Yet if all was well with Christianity prior to 313—if it had not yet transmogrified into Catholicism—we should expect to find all the peculiarly Catholic doctrines and practices arising only after that date. Before that, the historical record should show us a Christianity un-distinguishable from present-day fundamentalism. This is what fundamentalist commentators imply is the case, as they list dozens of Catholic “inventions”, each allegedly arising after 313.

Now it would have to be conceded that fundamentalists would have at least a superficial case if all the “inventions” they list *did* first develop after Christianity was legalized. If, in the first three centuries of Christian history, we could find no distinctively Catholic beliefs or practices, that would be an argument in favor of fundamentalism. When we look at ecclesiastical history, what do we really find? We see many of these peculiarly Catholic practices, and virtually all of the peculiarly Catholic doctrines, are mentioned in works written during the first, second, and third centuries. Some of the references are, admittedly, sparse, but others are surprisingly full, referring to these doctrines and practices as already being old. We find mention of a sacrificing priesthood, a hierarchy of bishops, prayers for the dead, the veneration of saints, and much more—enough, at any rate, to demolish the fundamentalists’ attempt at history.

This story about Constantine and the supposed influx of paganism into the Church might be called the standard fundamentalist history: bare bones, not

backed up with facts, ignorant of when the doctrines and practices really came into existence. Still, it is not an unreasonable theory, just a wrong one. If the datings were right, there would be merit to it.

There is a more exotic history that often is seen as a supplement to the standard one. It might be called the “Whore of Babylon” theory. Its best-known proponent is Ralph Woodrow, author of *Babylon Mystery Religion*. Instead of attributing the existence of Catholicism to Christianity’s legalization by Constantine, Woodrow and authors of like-minded works concentrate on superficial similarities between Catholicism and the ancient mystery religions, particularly the Babylonian cults. They make the logically false argument that similarity implies descent, and they pile up hundreds of examples, not one of which, in isolation, proves anything, but which, taken all together, persuade the ignorant by sheer volume.

To understand how wrong these fundamentalist writers are, one needs to understand a little about the religions that predated Christianity. There were, of course, the religions of Rome and Greece, which were unable to satisfy men’s hunger for God. The Roman religion was moralistic, concerned largely with inculcating civic virtue, but it lacked anything that could capture the imagination. The Greek religion was nonmoral (indeed, the Greek gods were often quite immoral), but it left more room for the imagination. The Greek religion was rejected by the best minds of Greece, who turned from it to philosophy, which, while taking many wrong turns, did at last make some progress, declaring the supremacy of the spiritual while adopting a false view of matter.

Then came the mystery religions, which promised to rescue men from the puerility of the traditional Greco-Roman cults. These religions, coming into the Empire from the East beginning about three centuries before Christ, included the cults of Isis from Egypt, Adonis from Babylonia, Attis from Phrygia, and Mithra from Persia. They seem to have arisen through personifications of nature, particularly birth and death as seen in the cycles of the seasons. Commonly, the resurrected gods had been sent from heaven, or the abode of the gods, to “save” humanity. These cults were clothed in luxurious rituals and impressed people brought up on the desiccated religions of Rome and Greece or on philosophy, which seemed to have run into a dead end. What made the mystery cults particularly attractive was that they offered the two things people in the Empire most wanted, the assurance of personal immortality and union with God, what could be called salvation. This

salvation was achieved by being initiated into the mysteries, or secret teachings, of a cult. After the initiation, which usually came through a kind of baptism, the new converts participated in a ceremony that reenacted the death and rebirth of the god.

These cults bore marked, though superficial, resemblance to Catholicism, which is what fundamentalist writers have played on. They also bore marked resemblance to fundamentalism, at least in things that Catholicism and fundamentalism hold in common, and this is something always overlooked in anti-Catholic writings. If the truth of Catholicism is undercut by similarities to mystery religions, so is the truth of fundamentalism. If Catholicism happens to have more points of similarity with paganism, it is not because it is more likely to have grown from these cults, but because it is a broader religion. Looked at another way, Catholicism is full-blown Christianity, while fundamentalism is truncated Christianity, so there exist more aspects in Catholicism to which there could be parallels in paganism. If the existence of similarities means Catholicism is false, the same conclusion must be drawn about fundamentalism; in this regard they sink or swim together.

That, anyway, is an overview of the pagan religions in the Roman Empire of the first century. It is from them, particularly from the mystery cults, that Woodrow insists Catholicism sprang. Most of his proofs are laughable; all of them are unworthy of serious consideration. Yet he can claim to have sold a quarter of a million copies of his book since it appeared in 1966—no mean feat and one that demonstrates that anti-Catholic sentiment is not only alive and well among fundamentalists and evangelicals, but that many of our separated brethren are concerned enough about the Catholic Church to turn to books that purport to deal with its origins. They want to learn how this strange growth developed.

A thirst for scholarship is not the only reason, not even the main reason, people buy this book. The main attraction is a kind of prurience. *Babylon Mystery Religion* does not have much to say about sex; it is not prurient in the most common connotation of the word. It is prurient according to the other dictionary definition in that it satisfies restless cravings many people have. They want to believe there is a dark secret to Catholicism, and they want to be let in on the secret. They want to luxuriate in horror stories, and they want their worst suspicions confirmed. Woodrow's book shows that Catholicism's success has been due not to its merits, but to influence-peddling, fortuitous events, and underhanded dealings, even violence. It demonstrates that

Catholicism is really something dark and alien to Christianity—something, in fact, connected with Christianity only tangentially, not essentially. Woodrow’s thesis, which is not new to him, is that Catholicism’s distinctive elements have not been derived from authentic Christianity. They are not legitimate developments, but wholesale borrowings from pre-Christian cults. This is how the back cover of the book explains it:

Babylon Mystery Religion is a detailed Biblical and historical account of how, when, why, and where ancient paganism was mixed with Christianity. From the early days of Babylon and the legends surrounding Nimrod, Semiramis, and Tammuz, certain rites and rituals are traced in their various developments, thus providing clues whereby the “mystery” is solved! The apostles had predicted that there would come a “falling away” and the proof of their prediction is now evident in history. With such evidence in hand, all true believers should seek, as never before, the simplicity found in Christ himself and to earnestly contend for that original faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

Babylon Mystery Religion is indebted to Alexander Hislop’s *The Two Babylons*, first published in 1853 and reprinted innumerable times since. In fact, Woodrow’s book would not be described wrongly as a revised version of Hislop’s. The argument is that things that distinguish Catholicism from Protestantism—such as the papacy, intercession of the saints, and purgatory—are really borrowings from ancient pagan religions. With sketches, photographs, woodcuts, and a host of one-liners, Woodrow attempts to show this. From Egyptian devotion to Isis, the reader is told, comes Catholic devotion to Mary, and from Buddhism comes the sign of the Cross. St. Bridget never existed, but was merely a replacement for a fertility goddess, Lent was derived from festivals in honor of the death and resurrection of Tanimuz.

Woodrow searched for coincidences, found some, and concludes that similarity implies descent. That, of course, is simply illogical. His demonstration that distinctive Catholic beliefs were taken from Egyptian, Babylonian, or Roman religions will convince no one acquainted with ancient or ecclesiastical history. His proofs are nothing more than a listing of similarities, and even then the similarities are often strained. He unconsciously sums up his technique as he decries the Catholic tendency to erect magnificent churches with bell towers. Wanting to show the use of towers comes from the Babylonians and the Tower of Babel, he begins by saying, “If the reader will permit us a certain liberty at this point. . . .”³ But by “this point”, already a quarter of the way through the text, the book is

nothing but a concatenation of liberties, and Woodrow has taken them about as far as they can go.

Here is an example. In the chapter on the Mass, there is a photograph of the interior of St. Peter's. As the text explains, it "shows the altar of St. Peter's and [the] huge canopy (the baldachinum [sic])—ninety-five feet high—which is supported by four columns, twisted and slightly covered by branches. At the top of the columns—'on high above' the most important altar in Catholicism—are sun-images like those that were used in pagan worship."⁴

Here the reader glances to the opposing page. The photograph has superimposed on it three arrows. Two point to these "sun-images" at the top of the columns. The "sun-images" are so indistinct that Woodrow has penned in, next to the arrows, little "happy face" suns so the reader will understand what is supposed to be present. The third arrow points to the apse. There, "high on the wall, as the photograph also shows, is a huge and elaborate golden sunburst image which, from the entrance of the church, also appears 'above' the altar. . . . Interestingly enough, the great temple at Babylon also featured a golden sun-image."⁵

This is his proof: he sees what he thinks is a "sunburst" and promptly deduces that Catholicism borrowed from the Babylonian cults. It is safe to say that Woodrow has never been to the Vatican and has never examined a clear photograph of the interior of the basilica. If he had, he would not have committed such a blunder. What he thinks is an "elaborate golden sunburst" on the far wall of St. Peter's is nothing less than a representation of the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove exuding rays of light. (Even fundamentalists use the dove motif in artwork.) The dove hovers over the reliquary said to contain St. Peter's chair. This is perhaps the most famous piece of art in the church—certainly the most eye-catching after the baldachin—and this blunder is representative of Woodrow's book. All in all, his contribution to the religious debate is a sorry example of "a detailed and historical account of how, when, why, and where ancient paganism was mixed with Christianity".

There is no need to refute each claim or explain each comparison made by Woodrow. His method is crude, and his book is unworthy of a point-by-point reply. A Catholic, if so inclined, could find in the mystery religions enough similarities to fundamentalism to prove that fundamentalism is really an offshoot of the cults, but the proof would be worthless. He could demonstrate that some mystery religions venerated a holy book as containing all religious

truth (their version of *sola scriptura*), just like fundamentalism. He could illustrate how the mystery religions claimed to give an “assurance of salvation”, just like fundamentalism. Such similarities would establish nothing. They would not imply descent.

When they look at the mystery religions, writers such as Woodrow think that by using Catholic terms as labels for pagan practices they have shown Catholicism’s origin. That simply is not logical, but, no matter how weak these arguments may be in the abstract, they influence people. Should they? No, because we should expect the true religion to be a fulfillment of, but not a complete contradiction of, mankind’s earlier stabs at religious truth. After all, each ancient religion had something true in it, even if what was true was buried under much that was false and even pernicious. On the positive side, ancient religions were remote preparations for Christ’s coming, which occurred in the “fullness of time”, when mankind had taken itself about as far as it could go on its own.

We should expect that the religion that is the fullness of truth, coming in the “fullness of time”, would incorporate the good points of earlier religions while rejecting their errors. Conversely, a religion that rejected not only the errors, but also the good points, of earlier religions would seem to be incomplete, as though it went too far in trying to remain pure, as though it threw out more than just the bathwater.

Chapter 13

Salvation

There is no more confusing topic, when fundamentalists and Catholics sit down to talk, than salvation. It goes beyond the standard question posed by fundamentalists: “Have you been saved?” It also means “don’t you wish you had an assurance of salvation?” Fundamentalists, along with most evangelicals, think they do. They are absolutely sure they will go to heaven immediately after death, and their assurance is no less lively than is the assurance of the Moslem participant in a jihad, who thinks he will be translated to seventh heaven (with all its houris) if he dies in battle.

Catholics are prone to label this presumption, but that really is not what it is. In Catholic theology, presumption is the attitude that one can gain heaven by his own merits or can gain pardon without repentance. It often manifests itself in a belief that one will be given an opportunity, at the last moment, to make amends—to get to confession, to say a perfect act of contrition—all based on the idea that one has led a reasonably good life. It is a kind of gambling, with the last throw of the dice guaranteed to come up right, and it is a sin because there is no reason to think things will happen that way, and to presume on one’s salvation is to play fast and loose with one’s soul. It is the most terminal form of Russian roulette.

Fundamentalists do not look at the matter as though they were playing a game. They conclude from the Bible that Christ actually promised that heaven is theirs in exchange for a remarkably simple act. All they have to do, at just one point in their lives, is “accept Christ as their personal Savior”. Then it is done. They may live exemplary lives thereafter, but living well is not crucial. It does not affect their salvation.

No matter what happens later, no matter how evilly they might live the remainder of their days, their salvation is assured. Granted, the Holy Spirit might punish them in this life for their sins (here fundamentalists take a rather Old Testament view on why one ought to be good—to avoid temporal evils, not to gain heaven, which is guaranteed no matter what). But in no way can

they undo their salvation, because it has nothing at all to do with the intrinsic worth of their souls or with what Catholics term actual sins.

It comes down to Galatians 2:20: “The Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me”. Christ is seen as one’s *personal* Savior, and that is why these words are a favorite with fundamentalists. For them, everything depends on an inner conviction that Christ died for them personally, and this verse is the ideal expression of it. Curiously, though, it stands alone in the apostle’s writings. Everywhere else he insists that Christ gave himself for *us*, and that he died for *us*. Paul was a churchman and sought salvation through the Church.

Kenneth E. Hagin, a Protestant evangelist, notes that this assurance of salvation comes through being “born again”: “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (Jn 3:3). “The new birth”, says Hagin, “is a necessity to being saved. Through the new birth you come into the right relationship with God.” There are many things that this new birth is not.

The new birth is not: confirmation—church membership—water baptism—the taking of sacraments—observing religious duties—an intellectual reception of Christianity—orthodoxy of faith—going to church—saying prayers—reading the Bible—being moral—being cultured or refined—doing good deeds—doing your best—nor any of the many other things some men are trusting in to save them.

Those who have obtained the new birth “did the one thing necessary—they accepted Jesus Christ as personal Savior by repenting and turning to God with the whole heart as a little child”.¹ And that was all they needed to do.

For Catholics, salvation depends on the state of the soul at death. Christ has already redeemed us, unlocked the gates of heaven, as it were. (Note that redemption is not the same as salvation but is a necessary prelude.) He did his part, and now we have to cooperate by doing ours. If we are to pass through those gates, we have to be in the right spiritual state. We have to be spiritually alive. If a soul is merely in a natural state, without sanctifying grace, which is the grace that gives it supernatural life, then it is dead supernaturally and incapable of enjoying heaven. It will not be allowed through the gates. But if it has sanctifying grace, then heaven is guaranteed even if a detour through purgatorial purification is required first. The Church teaches that only souls that are objectively good and objectively pleasing to God merit heaven, and such souls are ones filled with sanctifying grace.

The saint who never committed a mortal sin and the lifelong sinner who did not stop sinning until he repented on his deathbed will each gain heaven,

although the one will have to be cleansed in the anteroom of purgatory. When they get to heaven, the one with the greater capacity for love will enjoy greater blessedness there, although each will enjoy it as fully as he is capable. As Catholics see it, anyone can achieve heaven, and anyone can lose it. The lifelong sinner can remain that to the very end—and he then becomes an eternally lost sinner. The apparent saint can throw away salvation at the last moment and end up no better off than the man who never did a good deed in his life. It all depends on how one enters death, which is why dying is by far one's most important act.

To some it seems arbitrary that God would put the main emphasis on one's last moments, which may come entirely by surprise, but this reality is tempered by the fact that everyone is given a chance to repent—and not just a chance, but a succession of chances. Grace abounds and can always be grabbed if only reached for. God does everything short of getting down on his knees in front of us and begging us to repent.

That, anyway, is the way the Catholic Church looks at the matter. For fundamentalists it makes no difference how one lives or ends his life. One could be another Mother Teresa, yet still be damned by not accepting Christ in the fundamentalists' senses—and there have been more than a few fundamentalist writers who have remarked that Mother Teresa is doomed, her (to them false) faith and earthly good works notwithstanding. On the other hand, one can sober up Sunday morning, go to church, heed the altar call, announce to the congregants an acceptance of Jesus as personal Lord and Savior, and, so long as that is really believed, all is well. Nothing can be done, no sin can be committed, no matter how heinous, that will forfeit salvation.

The reason is that "accepting Jesus" has nothing to do with turning a spiritually dead soul into a soul alive with sanctifying grace. The soul remains the same. Whether one has led a good life or a clearly wicked one, the soul is depraved, worthless, unable to stand on its own before God; it is a bottomless pit of sin, and a few more sins thrown in will not change its nature, just as taking a cleaning compound to it will not make it shine in the least. For the fundamentalist, sanctifying grace is a figment of Catholics' imaginations. Accepting Christ accomplishes one thing and one thing only. It makes God cover one's sinfulness. It makes him turn a blind eye to it. It is as though he hides the soul under a cloak. Any soul under this cloak is admitted to heaven, no matter how putrescent the reality beneath; no one without the

cloak, no matter how pristine, can enter the pearly gates.

The Reformers saw justification as a mere legal act by which God declares the sinner to be meriting heaven even though he remains in fact unjust and sinful. It is not a real eradication of sin, but a covering or nonimputation. It is not an inner renewal and a real sanctification, only an external application of Christ's justice. The Catholic Church, not surprisingly, understands justification differently. It sees it as a true eradication of sin and a true sanctification and renewal. The soul becomes objectively pleasing to God and so merits heaven. It merits heaven because now it is actually good. Scripture conceives of the forgiveness of sins as a real and complete removal of them. The words used are "blot out" (Ps 50:3), "clears away" (Ps 102:12), "blotting out" (Is 43:25), "takes away" (Jn 1:29). The few times the Bible mentions "covering" sins refer not to the forgiveness of sins by God, but to the forgiveness of one man's sins by another. Since we cannot actually forgive one another's sins (that is up to God), the best we can do is overlook them or "cover" them. Fundamentalism's notion that God "covers" our sins, but does not actually remove them, is an unfortunate misreading of the Bible that found its origin in Luther.

On the positive side, the Bible shows that justification is a rebirth. It is a generation of a supernatural life in a former sinner (Jn 3:5; Titus 3:5), a thorough inner renewal (Eph 4:23), and a real sanctification (1 Cor 6:11). The soul itself becomes beautiful and holy. It is not just an ugly soul hidden under a beautiful cloak. Because it is beautiful and holy, it can be admitted to heaven, where nothing unclean is allowed.

The assurance of salvation is perhaps the most enticing tenet of fundamentalism, particularly for people steeped, justly, in the guilt of their former lives.² There is no need for true reformation of character, although to some extent that follows because of the joy of being saved and the very real desire to live the kind of life one's fellow fundamentalists lead. Being "born again" can be so easy, and in that sense it is a relief. There is, at least, no need for an embarrassing confession of faults, whether to a congregation or to a priest in a dark cubicle or, sometimes worse, to oneself. One can avoid all particularities, admitting transgressions in general, forgetting them in particular. There is no need for a true examination of conscience. Once one accepts Christ as his personal Lord and Savior, the past ceases to exist; more precisely, it exists, but it does not at all matter. It does not have to be made up for or atoned for, and it does not even have to be built on.

Does this sound too good to be true? Take a look at what fundamentalists say. Wilson Ewin, the author of a booklet called *There Is Therefore Now No Condemnation*,³ says that “the person who places his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His Blood shed at Calvary is eternally secure. He can never lose his salvation. No personal breaking of God’s or man’s laws or commandments can nullify that status.” Ewin cites Hebrews 9:12, which states: “nor by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered the most holy place once and for all, having obtained eternal redemption.” “To deny the assurance of salvation would be to deny Christ’s perfect redemption”, argues Ewin, and this is something he can say only because he confuses redemption and salvation. The truth is that we are all redeemed—Christians, Jews, Moslems, animists in the darkest forests—but our salvation is conditional.

Ewin says that “no wrong act or sinful deed can ever affect the believer’s salvation. The sinner did nothing to merit God’s grace and likewise he can do nothing to demerit grace. True, sinful conduct always lessens one’s fellowship with Christ, limits his contribution to God’s work and can result in serious disciplinary action by the Holy Spirit.” (But how serious can this disciplinary action be, since the loss of heaven is not part of it?) “However,” Ewin continues, “none of the numerous examples of sin involving God’s people in the Bible ever teach or suggest a loss of salvation. The reason? Salvation is by grace from the moment of the new birth until physical death occurs.” He cites Romans 5:15: “But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man’s offense many died, much more is the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.”

What this means, explains Ewin, is that

the sinner must be declared righteous in order to be saved. The righteousness is imputed (credited) to the sinner who repents and trusts only in Christ and His shed Blood for salvation. The sinner never becomes righteous. He is simply declared righteous. The righteousness of Christ is credited to the sinner who trusts. This wonderful truth is expressed in these words, “But to him who does not work but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, just as David also described the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin (Rom 4:5-8).

Ewin says that

absolute assurance of salvation through imputed righteousness can never be broken by sin. The reason is simple—this righteousness has nothing to do with the keeping of God’s commandments

or moral law. The Bible says, “But now the righteousness of God apart from the Law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God which is through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all who believe” (Rom, 3:21-22). God’s law or commandments were given to point out the fact of sin. The law shows the unregenerated man how wicked and lost he is before a Holy God. Keeping them or breaking them has no part in the believer’s possession of credited or imputed righteousness.

Ewin is particularly candid. Most fundamentalist writers state the assurance of salvation in a slightly different way. They do not emphasize the logical consequence of their position, that later sin, no matter how great, cannot undo one’s salvation. They agree with Ewin that assurance can be absolute, but instead of arguing that “no personal breaking of God’s or man’s laws or commandments can nullify” that assurance, they emphasize that someone who has been saved will not, in fact, sin as frequently as he did before accepting Christ as his personal Savior. (They do not say he will not sin at all.) Good works, for them as for Ewin, still have nothing to do with obtaining salvation, but they are a sign of election. Keith Green put it this way in his tract *Salvation According to Rome*:

Good works, of course, are pleasing to God and they have an important and necessary place in the life of the Christian. They naturally follow if one has true faith, and they are performed out of love and gratitude to God for the great salvation that He has bestowed. Good works, in other words, are not the cause and basis of salvation, but rather the fruits and proof of salvation. . . . [The Christian] performs them not to *get* saved, but because he *is* saved.

Some fundamentalists, perhaps uncomfortable with the cold logic of Ewin’s position and even with the softer version given by Green, go so far as to say that one can indeed lose salvation through later sin. They see the assurance of salvation as conditional and not absolute; it is dependent on the sinner keeping his part of a bargain. If the sinner continues to sin as before, he loses salvation, which is assured only so long as his repentance manifests itself outwardly in a reformed life. This is perilously close to the Catholic position and is grounded on Hebrews 10:26: “If we go on sinning wilfully, when once the full knowledge of truth has been granted to us, we have no further sacrifice for sin to look forward to; nothing but a terrible expectation of judgment, a fire that will eagerly consume the rebellious.” But this appears to be a minority position among fundamentalists, since most see it as no assurance at all and as making salvation a consequence of man’s works. The majority view is that salvation, if once achieved, simply cannot be lost, most fundamentalists being satisfied to say that the saved man either will not sin or

will not sin grievously. They may not carry their principles to their end and assert, with Ewin, that no sin can undo salvation; they just affirm that the saved man will not, in fact, commit any great sin. They avoid the charge of antinomianism by never admitting the saved man is, in a way, free to sin as he wishes, because they insist he will not wish to sin as he once did. (They seem disinclined to make an empirical investigation of the matter. They take no surveys to learn if there can be found a saved man who sins just as avidly as before, perhaps on the theory that any such continuation in sin would prove that he was never saved in the first place.)

From all this fundamentalists conclude that the New Testament, when speaking of living people as saints, means not that they will *become* saints in heaven *if* they follow God's commandments (this is the way Catholics understand Paul to have written), but that they are already, right now, saints, just like the saints in heaven. They have no more chance of not being allowed into heaven than have heaven's present residents of being thrown out. "You are no longer exiles, then, or aliens; the saints are your fellow citizens, you belong to God's household" (Eph 2:19).

Catholics look at such verses as merely Paul's expectations for his disciples; fundamentalists look at them as his acknowledgment of their existing status. Ronald Knox noted that there is no need "to suppose that all these high-sounding phrases which St. Paul uses about the Church refer to a collection of Saints already made perfect. To be sure, he calls all Christian folk 'saints'; it is his way; he sees us not as we are but as we ought to be. These 'saints' had to be warned against fornication, against thieving, against bitter schisms; it is the Church we know."⁴

The anonymous author of *Can Anyone Really Know for Sure?*⁵ says the "Lord Jesus wanted His followers to be so sure of their salvation that they would rejoice more in the expectation of heaven than in victories on earth. 'These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God (1 John 5:13).' " The author admits, though, that there can be a false assurance: "The New Testament teaches us that genuine assurance is possible and desirable, but it also warns us that we can be deceived through a false assurance. Jesus declared: 'Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord" shall enter the kingdom of heaven' (Mt 7:21)." But one can find true assurance. "First, you must accept the fact of the finished work of Christ. Acknowledging your sin

(Rom 3:23, 6:23) and inability to save yourself (Eph 2:8, 9), place your trust in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior (Acts 16:13). Having done that, you can know your salvation is real. That's true assurance!"

Is it really? Consider the case of a fundamentalist minister convicted of a heinous crime. What must the man in the pew conclude from his sin? That the pastor was just as saved as his congregants, who would have been embarrassed to attend a movie rated less than PG? Logically they would have to say precisely that, if the man had been saved according to the fundamentalist scheme of things, even if his experience of salvation had come years before, even if his last years had been ones of perversity. From the fundamentalists' perspective, one can do nothing to lose salvation.

Putting aside the question whether this is a positive invitation to antinomianism—after all, if one is guaranteed heaven, why not have fun here below while the having's good?—the congregants naturally wonder whether their pastor was ever saved at all. No matter what the theory might be, it rankles to think a saved person would do such a thing or that a saved person would sin at all. One might call it the fundamentalist equivalent of Catholics wondering whether the man in the chasuble was ever validly ordained. A man never validly ordained as a priest cannot confect the sacraments, even if he goes through the motions perfectly. A fundamentalist pastor who himself was never saved—well, that is a disturbing thought.

It is a thought that leads to one of two conclusions. Either this pastor was never saved in the first place, although everyone thought he was—this implies one can never tell from outward actions who is saved and who is not—or he was indeed saved but can now sin with impunity. But that is repugnant to common moral convictions. A pastor known for years by his congregants would be presumed saved; if they could be fooled, couldn't the man have fooled himself? If he, with some formal religious training, thought he was born again when he was not, how is the average fundamentalist to know whether his conversion "took"?

How can any fundamentalist know his salvation experience was real, that it "worked"? He cannot. Leading a good life immediately after being born again proves nothing, since one might sin grievously at a later time. Leading a bad life right after apparently being saved does not disprove it, since one's sins are immaterial.

Either way, the doctrine seems nearly useless because, when reflected on seriously, it seems to make impossible the very assurance it is supposed to

give.

Besides, there are verses that call the whole notion of the assurance of salvation into question. “I buffet my own body, and make it my slave; or I, who have preached to others, may myself be rejected as worthless”, says Paul (1 Cor 9:27). This follows the well-known verses that speak of running a race, and the race, of course, is the race of life, the finish line being entrance into heaven. The author of the Radio Bible Class booklet says that Paul “did not want to lose the reward for service through failing to satisfy his Lord; he was not afraid of losing his salvation”. While that interpretation seems to strain the passage a bit, it is not entirely unreasonable, but 1 Corinthians 9:27 should not be read in isolation.

Compare it to Philippians 2:12; “Beloved, you have always shown yourselves obedient; and now that I am at a distance, not less but much more than when I am present, you must work to earn your salvation, in anxious fear.” Other translations say “work out your own salvation in fear and trembling”. This is not the language of self-confident assurance. What is more, Paul tells us, “All of us have a scrutiny to undergo before Christ’s judgement-seat, for each to reap what his mortal life has earned, good or ill, according to his deeds” (2 Cor 5:10), and God “will award to every man what his acts have deserved” (Rom 2:6). But if the only act of consequence is the born-again experience, what difference do the other acts make? The apostle notes that “there is graciousness, then, in God, and there is also severity. His severity is for those who have fallen away, his graciousness is for thee, only so long as thou dost continue in his grace; if not, thou too shalt be pruned away” (Rom 11:22). Paul wrote this to people who were already “saved”, in a state of grace—a grace they could lose, becoming “unsaved”.

These verses demonstrate that we indeed will be judged by what we do and not just by the one act of whether we accept Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior. Yet it is not to be thought that being do-gooders is sufficient. The Bible is quite clear that we are saved by faith. The Reformers were quite right in saying this, and to this extent they merely repeated the constant teaching of Church. Where they erred was in saying that we are saved by faith alone. If it is true that we are judged by our acts (presuming first we have faith), then it is not enough to say that faith alone, in the traditional Protestant sense of fiduciary faith—trust in Christ’s promises—can be enough. If it were, we would not have to worry about our other acts.

Recall that Nicodemus was told by Christ that he must be reborn by water

and the Holy Spirit (Jn 3:5). In the fundamentalist scheme of things, despite their protestations, the water reduces to nothing at all. For Catholics the whole phrase “water and the Holy Spirit” is one; it means baptism. For fundamentalists only the second part of the phrase is operative. The Holy Spirit does his job by convicting us of sin and showing us we need to put our faith in Christ. The water is forgotten. If one dies after being born again, but before being baptized, one gets to heaven anyway. Although fundamentalists look at baptism as an ordinance, it is not necessary for salvation. There is no real connection between baptism and salvation because baptism as such does nothing. It is the intellectual acceptance of Christ that does it all.

Just as baptism, then, is not actually needed for salvation, the acceptance of Christ as personal Lord and Savior being enough, so no other act, no matter how good, can assist salvation. This flies in the face of the passages from Paul. Another way to look at it is this. Consider Romans 5:2: “We are confident in the hope of attaining glory as the sons of God.” If we, having been born again in fundamentalism’s sense, are now sure of heaven, and if we know nothing can deprive us of it, then we have no reason to hope because we *know* that heaven is ours. But “our salvation is founded upon the hope of something”, says Paul. “Hope would not be hope at all if its object were in view; how could man still hope for something which he sees?” (Rom 8:24). We hope for heaven, however well disposed we might be spiritually, because we know we still have a chance to lose it.

“Are you saved?” asks the fundamentalist. “I am redeemed,” answers the Catholic, “and like the apostle Paul I am working out my salvation in fear and trembling, with hopeful confidence—but not with a false assurance—and I do all this as the Church has taught, unchanged, from the time of Christ.”

Chapter 14

Baptism of Infants

Fundamentalists say the Catholic Church errs in baptizing infants. Baptism, they say, is for adults only, and it is to be administered only after an adult has undergone a “born-again” experience—that is, after he has “accepted Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Savior”. At the instant of acceptance, when he is “born again”, the adult becomes a Christian, one of the elect, and his salvation is assured. Baptism follows, although it actually does nothing itself to secure salvation; one who dies before being baptized, but after “being saved”, goes to heaven anyway.

Baptism, for fundamentalists, is not a sacrament, but an ordinance. It does not produce the grace it symbolizes; it is merely a symbol, a public manifestation of the adult’s conversion. Since only an adult can be converted, baptism is not appropriate for infants or for young children below the age of reason. Most fundamentalists say infants and young children are automatically saved, no matter what. Only once a person reaches the age of reason and has sinned does he need to “accept Jesus” in order to reach heaven.

The Catholic Church has always understood baptism differently, of course, understanding it as a sacrament that accomplishes several things, the first of which is the remission of sin, both original sin and actual sin: in the case of infants and young children, only original sin, since they are incapable of actual sin; in the case of older persons, both. “Repent, Peter said to them, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, to have your sins forgiven; then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is for you and your children, and for all those, however far away, whom the Lord our God calls to himself “(Acts 2:38-39). We also read: “Rise up, and receive baptism, washing away your sins at the invocation of his name” (Acts 22:16). These commands are universal, not restricted to adults.

Along with this forgiveness of sins comes an infusion of grace. It is this grace that makes the soul spiritually alive and capable of enjoying heaven.

There are other benefits, too, such as the elimination of punishment due for sins and the right to special graces necessary to enable the baptized to fulfill his baptismal promises.

In the Middle Ages, some groups, such as the Waldenses and Catharists, rejected infant baptism. Later, the Anabaptists (“re-baptizers”) echoed them in saying infants are incapable of being baptized validly. But the Catholic Church has always held that Christ’s law applies to infants as well as adults. Jesus said that no one can enter heaven unless he has been born again of water and the Holy Spirit (Jn 3:5). His words can be taken to apply to anyone capable of having a right to his Kingdom. He asserted such a right even for children: “Let the children be, do not keep them back from me; the Kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Mt 19:14).

Fundamentalists say this verse does not apply to young children or infants since it implies the persons being referred to are able to approach Christ on their own. (Older translations have “Suffer the little children to come unto me”, which seems to suggest they can do so under their own power.) Fundamentalists conclude the passage refers only to older, ambulatory children, those capable of sin. But the parallel text says, “Then they brought little children to him” (Lk 18:15), and following this are the same words as in Matthew 19:14. What is more, some translations even use the term “infants”. Indeed, in the Greek the words refer to infants in arms, little children who are unable to approach Christ on their own. Besides, Paul notes that baptism has replaced circumcision (Col 2:11-12). Of course, it was mainly infants who were circumcised under the Old Law; circumcision of adults was rare, there being few converts to Judaism. If Paul, in making this parallel, meant to exclude infants from baptism, it is strange that he did not say so.

It is not often admitted by fundamentalists that nowhere does the Bible actually say baptism is to be restricted to adults. They just conclude that is what it should be taken as meaning, even if the text does not explicitly support such a view. Naturally enough, the people whose baptisms we read about in Scripture are adults because they were converted as adults. This makes sense, because Christianity was just starting out and there were no “cradle Christians”, no people brought up from childhood in Christian homes.

One might ask, Does the Bible ever say that infants or young children *can* be baptized? The indications are fairly clear. Lydia was converted by Paul’s preaching. “She was baptized, with all her household” (Acts 16:15). The jailer of Paul and Silas, who was about to commit suicide when they were

miraculously freed from their imprisonment, was converted by them. We are told that “without delay he and all his were baptized” (Acts 16:33). And in his greetings to the Corinthians, Paul recalled that, “Yes, and I did baptize the household of Stephanas” (1 Cor 1:16).

In all these cases, whole households or families were baptized. Presumably this means more than just the spouse: at least the children, probably also servants, if the household had any. But would an impoverished jailer, about to kill himself for what he took to be malfeasance, have servants at all, being, as he was, near the bottom of the social ladder? Not likely. “He and all his” must refer to himself plus at least two others; if it referred to just himself and his wife, we would expect to read “without delay he and his wife were baptized”, but we read “without delay he and all his were baptized”.

The natural implication is that the jailer had at least one child who was baptized, too. A similar argument can be made in the other cases. Granted, we cannot tell the age of the children; they may have been past the age of reason, not infants. Then again, they could have been babes in arms. More probably, there were both younger and older children. Even though the scriptural evidence is not absolutely conclusive on the issue, it leans in favor of infant baptism. At any rate, there is nothing in the New Testament that says infants and young children are unsuited to baptism.

The present Catholic attitude accords perfectly with early Christian practices. Origen, for instance, wrote in the third century that “the Church received from the apostles the tradition of giving baptism also to infants.”¹ John Chrysostom said, “For this reason we baptize even infants, though they do not have sins [of their own]: so that there may be given to them holiness, righteousness, adoption, inheritance, brotherhood with Christ, and that they may be his members.”² The Council of Carthage, in 252, condemned the opinion that infants should be withheld from baptism until the eighth day after birth.³

Now these citations—they could be multiplied—do not themselves prove, beyond doubt, that baptism of infants was authorized by Christ, but they do refer to a practice that was already old at an early date. After all, the Council of Carthage was not adjudicating a dispute about infant baptism as such, but was deciding at what point infants should be baptized. No one, apparently, was claiming the practice was contrary to Scripture or Tradition. It was as though they were saying, “We all agree infants can be baptized and that infant baptism was practiced from the first, but exactly *when* should they be

baptized?” Another telling point: If infant baptism was opposed to the religious practices of the first believers, why do we have no record of early Christian writers condemning it?

Fundamentalists do not pay much attention to the historical situation. They deflect appeals to history by saying baptism requires faith and children are incapable of having faith. Thus, no baptism for them. It is true that Christ prescribed instruction and actual faith for adult converts (Mt 28:19-20), but his general law on the absolute necessity of baptism for salvation (Jn 3:5) puts no restriction on the subject of baptism. Although infants are included in the law, they cannot be expected to meet requirements that cannot be met because of their age. They cannot be expected to be instructed and have faith when they are incapable of receiving instruction or manifesting faith.

The fundamentalist position on infant baptism is a consequence not of the Bible's strictures, but of the logic of fundamentalism's notion of salvation. Although the Bible is not as clear on the issue as we might wish, certainly what it says leans toward the Catholic position, which is seconded by early Christian practice and writings. Fundamentalists ignore all that because they must preserve their concept of how salvation is obtained. They see salvation as coming not through an infusion of grace, which is the Catholic position, but through an acceptance of Jesus as one's personal Lord and Savior. Since only an adult can be saved in this way, they conclude baptism is wasted on infants and young children—thus their opposition to the Catholic position.

Chapter 15

The Forgiveness of Sins

All pardon for sins comes, ultimately, from Calvary, but how is this pardon to be received by individuals? How are people who sin today to obtain forgiveness? Did Christ leave us any means within the Church to take away sin? The Bible says he gave us two means. Baptism was given to take away the sin inherited from Adam (original sin) and any sins (called actual sins, because they come from our own acts) committed before baptism. For sins committed after baptism, a different sacrament is needed. It has been called penance, confession, and reconciliation, each word emphasizing one of its aspects.

During his life, Christ forgave sins, as in the case of the woman taken in adultery (Jn 8:1-11) and the woman who anointed his feet (Lk 7:48). He exercised this power as *man*, “to convince you that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins while he is on earth” (Mk 2:10). Since he would not always be with the Church, visibly, Christ gave this power to other men so the Church, which is the continuation of his presence throughout time, would be able to offer forgiveness to future generations. He gave his power to the apostles, and it was necessarily a communicable power, one that could be passed on to their successors and agents, since, obviously, the apostles would not always be on earth either. “He breathed on them, and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit; when you forgive men’s sins, they are forgiven, when you hold them bound, they are held bound” (Jn 20:22-23).¹

Christ told the apostles to follow his example: “As the Father sent me, so am I sending you” (Jn 20:21). “What he did, they were to do. Just as the apostles were to carry Christ’s message to the whole world, so were they to carry his forgiveness: “I promise you, all that you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and all that you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Mt 18:18). This power was not to be used as being from themselves, but as being from God: “This, as always, is God’s doing; it is he who, through Christ, has reconciled us to himself, and allowed us to minister this

reconciliation of his to others” (2 Cor 5:18). Indeed, confirms Paul, “We are Christ’s ambassadors” (2 Cor 5:20).

It is said by some that any power given to the apostles died with them. Not so. Some powers, certainly, must have, such as universal jurisdiction. But the powers absolutely necessary to maintain the Church as a living, spiritual society had to be passed down, generation to generation. If they ceased, the Church would cease, except as a quaint abstraction. Christ ordered the apostles to “make disciples of all nations”. It would take time, much time. He promised his assistance”. “And behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world” (Mt 28:19-20).

If the apostles and disciples believed that Christ instituted a priesthood that included the power to forgive sins in his stead, we would expect the successors of the apostles—that is, the bishops—and Christians of later years to act as though such power was legitimately and habitually exercised. On the other hand, if the priestly forgiveness of sins was what fundamentalists term it, an “invention”, and if it was something foisted on the young Church by ecclesiastical or political leaders, we would expect to find records of protest. In fact, in early Christian writings we find no sign of protests concerning priestly forgiveness of sins. Quite the contrary. We find confession to a priest was accepted as consistent with the original deposit of faith.

If the Church itself instituted confession (or “auricular confession”, as some like to emphasize: private confession “to the ear” of a priest), and if the sacrament did not stem directly from Christ, it should be possible to point to a date for its “invention”. Some opponents of the Catholic position think they can do that. Loraine Boettner claims “auricular confession to a priest instead of to God” was instituted in 1215 at the Fourth Lateran Council.² This is an extreme example, even for a committed anti-Catholic. There are not many people with the gumption to place the “invention” of confession so late, since there is so much early Christian writing—a good portion of it a thousand and more years before that Council—that refers to the practice of confession as something already long established. One cannot very well “invent” something that has been around a millennium and more.

Actually, the Fourth Lateran Council did not introduce confession, although it did discuss it. To combat the lax morals of the time (morals are always more lax than they should be, at any time in history; that is one consequence of original sin), the Council more specifically defined the already-existing duty to confess one’s sins by saying Catholics should

confess at least once a year. To issue an official decree about a sacrament is hardly the same as “inventing” that sacrament.

The earliest Christian writings, such as the first-century *Didache*, are indefinite on the procedure to be used for the forgiveness of sins, but a self-accusation is listed as a part of the Church’s requirement by the time of Irenaeus.³ The sacrament of penance is clearly in use, but it is not yet clear from Irenaeus just how, or to whom, confession is to be made. Is it privately, to the priest, or before the whole congregation with the priest presiding? The one thing we can say for sure is that the sacrament is understood by Irenaeus to go back to the beginning of the Church.

Slightly later Christian writers, such as Origen,⁴ Cyprian,⁵ and Aphraates,⁶ are quite clear in saying confession is to be made to a priest. (In fact, in their writings the whole process of penance is termed *exhomologesis*, which simply means confession: the confession was seen as the main part of the sacrament.) Cyprian writes that the forgiving of sins can take place only “through the priests”.⁷ Ambrose makes things clear, saying, “this right is given to priests only”.⁸ Pope Leo I says absolution can be obtained only through the prayers of the priests.⁹ These utterances are not taken as anything novel, but as reminders of accepted belief. We have no record of anyone objecting, of anyone claiming these men were pushing an “invention”.

Note that the power given to the apostles by Christ was twofold: to forgive sins or to hold them bound, which means to retain them unforgiven. Several things follow from this. First, the apostles could not know what sins to forgive, what not to forgive, unless they were first told the sins by the sinner. This implies confession. Second, their authority was not merely to proclaim that God had already forgiven sins or that he would forgive sins if there were proper repentance.

Such interpretations do not account for the distinction between forgiving and retaining—nor do they account for the importance given to the utterance in John 20:22-23. If God has already forgiven all a man’s sins or will forgive them all, past and future, on a single act of repentance, then it makes little sense to tell the apostles they have been given the power to “retain” sins, since forgiveness would be an all-or-nothing thing and nothing could be “retained”. If forgiveness can be partial, how is one to tell which sins have been forgiven, which not, in the absence of a priestly decision? One cannot very well rely on gut feelings. No, the biblical passages make sense, hang together, only if the apostles and their successors were given a real authority.

Still, some people are not convinced. One is Paul Juris, a former priest, now a fundamentalist, who has written a pamphlet on this subject.¹⁰ The pamphlet is widely distributed by organizations opposed to Catholicism. The cover describes the work as “a study of John 20:23, a much misunderstood and misused portion of Scripture pertaining to the forgiveness of sins”. Juris begins by mentioning “two main schools of thought”, the first being the Catholic position, the second the fundamentalist. He puts the fundamentalist position this way: “In this setting and with these words, Jesus was commissioning his disciples, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to go and preach the Gospel to every creature. Those who believed the Gospel, their sins would be forgiven. Those who refused to believe the Gospel, their sins would be retained.”

He correctly notes that “among Christians, it is generally agreed that regular confession of one’s sins is obviously necessary to remain in good relationship with God. So the issue is not whether we should or should not confess our sins. Rather, the real issue is: How does God say that our sins are forgiven or retained?” Juris says, “Since John 20:23 can be interpreted in more than one way, it will be necessary to examine this portion of Scripture not only in its context, but also in the light of other Scriptures pertaining directly to this subject. And, since we know that God’s Word never contradicts itself, what better way could we arrive at the true meaning of this verse of Scripture, than by comparing it with other Scriptures?”

This sounds fine, on the surface, but this apparently reasonable approach masks what really happens next. Juris engages in verse slinging, listing as many verses as he can find that refer to God forgiving sins, in hope the sheer mass of verses will settle the question. Yet none of the verses he lists specifically interprets John 20:23, and none contradicts the Catholic interpretation. For instance, he cites verses such as these: “Be it known therefore to you, brethren, that through him [Christ] forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and in him everyone who believes is acquitted of all the things of which you could not be acquitted by the Law of Moses” (Acts 13:38-39); “And he said to them, Go into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he who does not believe shall be condemned” (Mk 16:15-16).

Juris says verses such as these demonstrate that “all that was left for the disciples to do was to ‘go’ and ‘proclaim’ this wonderful good news (the Gospel) to all men. As they proclaimed this good news of the Gospel, those

who believed the Gospel, their sins would be forgiven. Those who rejected (did not believe) the Gospel, their sins would be retained.” This is not a proof; these verses, and the others he lists, do not interpret John 20:23. Juris does nothing more than show the Bible says God will forgive sins, something no one doubts. He does not remotely prove that John 20:23 is equivalent to a command to “go” and to “preach”. He sidesteps the evident problems in the fundamentalist interpretation of the verse.

It takes no scholar to see the passage does not say anything about preaching the good news. Jesus tells the apostles that “when you forgive men’s sins, they are forgiven”. Nothing here about preaching—that is handled elsewhere, such as in Matthew 28:19 and related verses. Instead, Jesus is telling the apostles that they have been empowered to do something. He does not say, “When God forgives men’s sins, they are forgiven.” It is hardly necessary to say that. He uses the second person plural: “you”. He talks about the apostles forgiving, not preaching. When he refers to retaining sins, he uses the same form: “When you hold them bound, they are held bound.” There it is again, “you”.

What Juris does—his pamphlet is a good example of this—is to select verses, all that he can find, that mention the same general topic, the forgiveness of sins. Since the other verses he gives, about two dozen of them, speak about forgiveness by God, he concludes, improperly, that God could not have appointed men as his agents. The best Juris can do, ultimately, is to assert that John 20:23 means the apostles were given authority only to proclaim the forgiveness of sins—but asserting is not proving.

Granted, his is a technique that works. Many readers get the impression the fundamentalist interpretation has been shown to be true. After all, if one proposes to interpret one verse and accomplishes that by listing irrelevant verses that refer to something other than the specific point in controversy, lazy readers will conclude an impressive array of evidence has been marshaled. All they have to do is count the citations. Here is one for the Catholics, they say, looking at John 20:22-23, but ten or twenty or thirty for the fundamentalists. The fundamentalists must be right! They do not detect that the ten or twenty or thirty verses are a smokescreen.

Juris’ technique illustrates that fundamentalists do not really “find” their doctrines through a literal reading of the Bible. They approach the Bible with already-held views, their own tradition, one might say, and they use the Bible to substantiate these views. Some can be substantiated easily, such as the

reality of the Resurrection. Others cannot be substantiated by Scripture at all, because they are contrary to Scripture. In these cases, Scripture is either ignored or interpreted in an awkwardly metaphorical sense, as with John 6, where the Eucharist is promised, or as with John 20:22-23, where the sacrament of penance is established.

Another point. Fundamentalist writers often ignore John 20:22-23 since it is troublesome. They shift focus, insisting there is “only one mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ” (1 Tim 2:5). True, but they draw an improper inference. Christ was at liberty to decide how his mediation would be applied to us. It is a question of fact. Naturally enough, the one who is offended does the forgiving. When we sin, we offend God, so it is he to whom we look for forgiveness. But he can arrange his forgiveness either personally and immediately or through an agent. Which did he declare to be the usual (though not exclusive) way to forgive sins: by direct application to him or by means of confessing to a priest? If the first, then John 20:22-23 becomes unintelligible. The words would not remotely mean what they so clearly seem to say.

Is the Catholic who confesses his sins to a priest any better off than the non-Catholic who confesses straight to God? Yes. First, he seeks forgiveness the way Christ intended it to be sought.

Second, by confessing to a priest the Catholic learns a lesson in humility, which is conveniently avoided when one confesses only through private prayer—and how we all desire to escape humbling experiences! Third, the Catholic receives sacramental graces the non-Catholic does not get; through the sacrament of penance not only are sins forgiven, but graces are obtained. Fourth, and in some ways the most important, the Catholic is assured that his sins are forgiven; he does not have to rely on a subjective “feeling”. Lastly, the Catholic can also obtain sound advice on avoiding sin in the future, while the non-Catholic praying in private remains uninstructed.

True, Christ could have decided that sins would normally be forgiven merely through private prayer, but he knew the world would grow old before his return. With himself gone, he wanted his followers to have every possible consolation, every possible assurance, every possible help, so he instituted the sacrament through which we are reconciled to God. During his lifetime Christ sent out his followers to do his work. Just before he left this world, he gave the apostles special authority, commissioning them to make God’s forgiveness present to all lands, to all people, and the whole Christian world

accepted this until just a few centuries ago. If there is an “invention” here, it is not the sacrament of penance, but the notion that the priestly forgiveness of sins is not to be found in the Bible or in early Christian history.

Chapter 16

Purgatory

In 1769 James Boswell had this exchange with Samuel Johnson:

Boswell: “What do you think, Sir, of purgatory, as believed by the Roman Catholics?”

Johnson: “Why, Sir, it is a very harmless doctrine. They are of the opinion that the generality of mankind are neither so obstinately wicked as to deserve everlasting punishment, nor so good as to merit being admitted into the society of blessed spirits; and therefore that God is graciously pleased to allow a middle state, where they may be purified by certain degrees of suffering. You see, Sir, there is nothing unreasonable in this.”

Boswell: “But then, Sir, their Masses for the dead?”

Johnson: “Why, Sir, if it be at once established that there are souls in purgatory, it is as proper to pray for them, as for our brethren of mankind who are yet in this life.”¹

Although Johnson was no “Catholic”, he recognized that the doctrine of purgatory is not at odds with other tenets of Christianity. In fact, as he may have known, there is considerable scriptural warrant for it, even if the doctrine is not explicitly set out in the Bible.

The doctrine can be stated briefly. Purgatory is a state of purification, where the soul that has fully repented of its sins but has not fully expiated them has removed from itself the last elements of uncleanness. In purgatory all remaining love of self is transformed into love of God. At death one’s soul goes to heaven, if it is completely fit for heaven; to purgatory, if it is not quite fit for heaven, but not worthy of condemnation; or to hell, if it is completely unfit for heaven. Purgatory is a temporary state. Everyone who enters it will get to heaven, and, after the last soul leaves purgatory for heaven, purgatory will cease to exist. There will remain only heaven and hell.

When we die, we undergo what is called the particular, or individual, judgment. We are judged instantly and receive our reward, for good or ill. We know at once what our final destiny will be. At the end of time, though, when the last people have died, there will come the general judgment to

which the Bible refers. In it all our sins will be revealed. Augustine said, in *The City of God*, that “temporary punishments are suffered by some in this life only, by others after death, by others both now and then; but all of them before that last and strictest judgment”.² It is between the particular and general judgments, then, that the soul expiates its sins: “I tell you, you will not get out till you have paid the very last penny” (Lk 12:59). If full expiation occurs before the general judgment, the soul is released from purgatory and goes to heaven.

Fundamentalists note that biblical references to the judgment refer only to heaven and hell. Quite true. That is because most of the references are to the general judgment, when all will be judged at once (which means, for those who died earlier and already underwent an individual judgment, a kind of rejudging, but one that is public). It is at the general judgment that the justice and mercy of God will be demonstrated to all. Opponents of the Catholic position are generally silent about what happens to the souls of people who die long before the Last Day. There is no hint from Scripture that these souls remain in suspended animation. No, “men die only once, and after that comes judgment” (Heb 9:27). Judgment is immediate—which, by the way, is one reason why reincarnation is impossible. It is here, between individual judgment and general judgment, that a soul may find itself in purgatory.

Fundamentalists are fond of saying the Catholic Church “invented” the doctrine of purgatory, but they have trouble saying just when. Most professional anti-Catholics—the ones who make their living attacking “Romanism”—seem to place the blame on Pope Gregory the Great, who reigned from 590-604. That hardly accounts for the request of Monica, mother of Augustine, who asked her son, in the fourth century, to remember her soul in his Masses. This would have made no sense if she thought her soul could not be helped by prayers, if she thought there was no possibility of being somewhere other than heaven or hell.

Still less does the ascription of the doctrine to Gregory account for the graffiti in the catacombs, where the earliest Christians, during the persecutions of the first three centuries, recorded prayers for the dead. Indeed, some of the earliest noninspired Christian writings, such as the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* (second century), refer to the Christian custom of praying for the dead. Such prayers would have been made only if Christians believed in purgatory, even if they did not use that name for it.

No, the historical argument breaks down. Whenever a date is set for the

“invention” of purgatory, one can point to something to show the doctrine was already old many years before that date. Besides, if at some point the doctrine was pulled out of a clerical hat, why does ecclesiastical history record no protest? A study of the history of doctrines shows Christians in the first centuries were up in arms, sometimes quite literally, if anyone suggested the least change in beliefs. They were extremely conservative people, their test of the truth of a doctrine being the question: Was this believed by our ancestors? Surely belief in purgatory would be considered a great change, if it had not been believed from the first—so where are the records of protests? They do not exist, and they never existed. There is no hint, in the oldest writings available to us (or in later ones, for that matter), that “true believers” in the immediate postapostolic years complained about purgatory as a novel doctrine. They must have understood that the oral teaching of the apostles, what Catholics call Tradition, and the Bible not only did not contradict the doctrine but endorsed it.

It is no wonder, then, that professional anti-Catholics spend little time on the history of the belief. (Who can blame them for avoiding an unpleasant subject?) They prefer to claim, instead, that the Bible speaks only of heaven and hell. Wrong again. It speaks quite plainly of a third place, where Christ went after his death, the place commonly called the Limbo of the Fathers, where the just who died before the Redemption were waiting for heaven to be opened to them (1 Pet 3:19). This place was neither heaven nor hell.

Even if the Limbo of the Fathers was not purgatory, its existence shows that a temporary, intermediate state is not contrary to Scripture. Look at it this way. If the Limbo of the Fathers *was* purgatory, then this one verse directly teaches the existence of purgatory. If the Limbo of the Fathers was a different temporary state, then the Bible at least says such a state can exist. It at least proves there can be more than just heaven and hell.

Fundamentalists also say, “We cannot find the word purgatory in Scripture.” True, but that is hardly the point. The words Trinity and Incarnation are not in Scripture either, yet those doctrines are taught in it. Likewise, Scripture teaches that purgatory exists, even if it does not use that word and even if 1 Peter 3:19 refers to a place other than purgatory.

Christ refers to the sinner for whom “there is no forgiveness, either in this world or in the world to come” (Mt 12:32). This implies expiation can occur after death. Paul tells us that at the day of judgment each man’s work will be tried. This trial happens after death. What happens if a man’s work fails the

test? “He will be the loser; and yet he himself will be saved, though only as men are saved by passing through fire” (1 Cor 3:15). Now this loss, this penalty, cannot refer to consignment to hell, since no one is saved there; and heaven cannot be meant, since there is no suffering (“fire”) there. Purgatory alone explains this passage. Then there is the Bible’s approbation of prayers for the dead: “It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they might be loosed from their sins” (2 Mace 12:46). Prayers are not needed by those in heaven, and they cannot help those in hell. That means some people must be in a third place, at least temporarily.³

Why would anyone go to purgatory? To be cleansed. “Nothing unclean shall enter heaven” (Rev 21:27). Anyone who has not completely expiated his sins—that is, not just had them forgiven, but “made up” for them, been punished for them—in this life is, to some extent, “unclean”. Through repentance he may have gained the grace needed to qualify for heaven (which is to say his soul is spiritually alive), but that is not enough. He needs to be cleansed completely. By not admitting the doctrine of purgatory, one necessarily implies that even the slightest defilement results in the loss of the soul, yet even here below not every crime is a capital offense: “Not all sin is deadly” (1 Jn 5:17).

Fundamentalists claim, as an article in Jimmy Swaggart’s magazine *The Evangelist* put it, that “Scripture clearly reveals that all the demands of divine justice on the sinner have been completely fulfilled in Jesus Christ. It also reveals that Christ has totally redeemed, or purchased back, that which was lost. The advocates of a purgatory (and the necessity of prayer for the dead) say, in effect, that the redemption of Christ was incomplete. . . . It has all been done for us by Jesus Christ, there is nothing to be added or done by man.”⁴ This presumes there is a contradiction between the Redemption and our suffering in expiation for our sins. There is not, whether that suffering is in this life or in the next. Paul said he rejoiced “in my sufferings for you, and [I] fill up those things that are wanting in the suffering of Christ” (Col 1:24). Ronald Knox explained this passage by noting that “the obvious meaning is that Christ’s sufferings, although fully satisfactory on behalf of our sins, leave us under a debt of honour, as it were, to repay them by sufferings of our own.”⁵ Paul did not imply there was something lacking in the Redemption, that Christ could not pull it off on his own, and no fundamentalist misreads Colossians 1:24 that way. Analogously, it is not contrary to the Redemption to say we must suffer for our sins; it is a matter of justice. We can suffer here,

or hereafter, or in both places, as Augustine wrote.

Some say, “God does not demand expiation after having forgiven sins.” Tell that to King David. When David repented, God sent Nathan with a message for him: “The Lord on his part has forgiven your sin: you shall not die. But since you have utterly spurned the Lord by this deed, the child born to you must surely die” (2 Sam 12:14). Even after David’s sin was forgiven, he had to undergo expiation. Can we expect less? Fundamentalists think the answer is yes, because Christ obviated the need for any expiation on our part, but the Bible nowhere teaches that. Having one’s sins forgiven is not the same thing as having the punishment for them wiped out.

The main reason for opposition to purgatory is that it cannot coexist with fundamentalism’s notion of salvation. For fundamentalists, salvation comes by “accepting Christ as one’s personal Savior”. Aside from that one act of acceptance, no acts—meaning no good deeds and no sins—make any difference with respect to one’s salvation. If one is “born again” in fundamentalism’s sense, salvation has already occurred, and nothing can keep one from heaven. If not “born again”, one is damned. In fundamentalism’s scheme of things, purgatory would be superfluous, since cleansing before entering heaven would be unnecessary, on the notion that every soul is unclean and God ignores the uncleanness by “covering” the soul’s sinfulness.

Purgatory makes sense only if there is a requirement that a soul not just be *declared* to be clean, but actually *be* clean. After all, if a guilty soul is merely “covered”, if its sinful state still exists but is officially ignored, then, for all the protestations that may be given, it is still a guilty soul. It is still unclean. A man who has not bathed in a month is not cleansed merely by putting on clean clothes; clean clothes will not remove the dirt. Likewise, “covering” a soul will not purify it; its dirty state is merely hidden from view. Catholic theology takes literally the notion that “nothing unclean shall enter heaven”. From this it is inferred that a dirty soul, even if “covered”, remains a dirty soul and is not fit for heaven. It needs to be cleansed or purged of its dirtiness. The purging comes in purgatory.

There is another argument commonly used against purgatory. It is that the Catholic Church makes money from the doctrine. Without purgatory, the claim goes, the Church would go broke. Any number of anti-Catholic books, from the tamest to the most bizarre, claim the Church owes the majority of its wealth to this doctrine. The numbers do not add up.

When a Catholic requests a memorial Mass for the dead—that is, a Mass said for the benefit of someone in purgatory—it is customary to give the parish a stipend, on the principle that the laborer is worth his hire (Lk 10:7) and those who preside at the altar share the altar’s offerings (1 Cor 9:13-14). In the United States, a stipend is commonly around five dollars, but the indigent do not have to pay anything, and no parish maintains a “schedule of fees”. A few people, of course, freely offer more. On average, though, a parish can expect to receive something less than five dollars by way of stipend for each memorial Mass said. These Masses are usually said on weekdays.

Look at what happens on a Sunday. There are often hundreds of people at Mass. In a crowded parish, there may be thousands. Many families and individuals deposit five dollars or more into the collection basket; others deposit less. A few give much more. A parish might have four or five or six Masses on a Sunday. The total from the Sunday collections far outstrips the paltry amount received from the memorial Masses. The facts are that no Catholic parish gets rich from Mass stipends—or even gets much at all. .

In interpreting the Bible, in determining whether the doctrine of purgatory contradicts or confirms what is found in its pages, we come on a recurring question: “Who is to decide?” It hardly suffices to say, “Let the Bible itself decide”, since it is the interpretation of the Bible that is in question, and no book, not even the Bible, can be self-interpreting. Either we interpret it ourselves, using our own resources, or we listen to the word of a divinely appointed interpreter, if one has been established. Catholics hold that Christ empowered the Church to give infallible interpretations of the Bible. “I have still much to say to you, but it is beyond your reach as yet. It will be for him, the truth-giving Spirit, when he comes, to guide you in all truth” (Jn 16:12). This Jesus said to the apostles.

This takes us, of course, to the rule of faith—is it to be found in the Bible alone or in the Bible and Tradition, as handed down by the Church? That question was examined in an earlier chapter, and there is no need to repeat the arguments here. The reader just needs to keep in mind that the controversy about purgatory is really a controversy about much more than purgatory. Purgatory has just been a convenient warring ground. The ultimate disagreement concerns the doctrine of *sola scriptura*. If fundamentalists understood why that doctrine will not wash—why, in fact, it is contrary to Scripture—they would have little difficulty in accepting purgatory and other

Catholic beliefs, such as the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption, which are not explicitly stated in the Bible.

Chapter 17

Peter and the Papacy

Like other Protestants, fundamentalists say Peter was never appointed by Christ as the earthly head of the Church for the simple reason that the Church has no earthly head and was never meant to have one. Christ is the Church's only foundation, in every sense of that term.

The papacy, they say, is an institution that arose out of third-century politics, both secular and ecclesiastical; it has no connection, other than mythological, with the New Testament. It was not established by Christ, even though supposed "successors" to Peter and their apologists claim it was. At best the papacy is a ruse; at worst, a work of the devil. In any case, it is an institution designed to give the Catholic Church an authority it simply does not have.

Besides, the argument continues, Peter was never in Rome and so could not have been the first Pope, and that puts the lie to talk about his "successors"; the unbroken chain is broken in its first link. How can Catholics talk about the divine origin of the papacy when their claim about Peter's whereabouts is wrong? Let us begin with this last charge.

At first glance, it might seem the question, whether Peter went to Rome and died there, is inconsequential. In a way it is. After all, his being in Rome would not itself prove the existence of the papacy; it would be a false inference to say he must have been the first Pope since he was in Rome and later Popes ruled from Rome. With that logic, Paul would have an equal claim to the title of first Pope, since he was an apostle and went to Rome. On the other hand, even if Peter never made it to the capital, he still could have been the first Pope, since one of his successors could have been the first holder of that office to settle there.

Besides, if Peter did end his days at Rome, that might have something to say about who his legitimate successors would be (and it does, since the man elected Bishop of Rome is automatically the new Pope on the notion that Peter was the first Bishop of Rome and the Pope is merely Peter's successor),

but it would say nothing about the status of the papal office. It would not establish that the papacy was instituted by Christ in the first place.

No, somehow the question, while interesting historically, does not seem to be crucial to the real issue, whether the papacy was founded by Christ and, if so, what authority the Pope wields. Still, most anti-Catholic organizations take up the matter and even go to considerable trouble to prove Peter could not have been in Rome. Why? Because they think they can get mileage out of it.

Here is a point on which we can put the lie to Catholic claims, they think. Catholics trace the papacy to Peter, and they say he was martyred in Rome after heading the Church there. If we could show he never went to Rome, that would undermine—psychologically if not logically—their assertion that Peter was the first Pope. If people conclude the Catholic Church is wrong on this historical point, they will conclude it is wrong on the larger one, the supposed existence of the papacy. Such is the reasoning, the real reasoning, of leading anti-Catholics.

The case is stated most succinctly, even if not so bluntly, by Loraine Boettner in *Roman Catholicism*:

The remarkable thing, however, about Peter's alleged bishopric in Rome is that the New Testament has not one word to say about it. The word Rome occurs only nine times in the Bible [actually, ten times in the Old Testament and ten times in the New], and never is Peter mentioned in connection with it. There is no allusion to Rome in either of his epistles. Paul's journey to the city is recorded in great detail (Acts 27 and 28). There is in fact no New Testament evidence, nor any historical proof of any kind, that Peter ever was in Rome. All rests on legend.¹

Well, what about it? Admittedly the scriptural evidence for Peter being in Rome is weak. Nowhere does the Bible unequivocally say he was there; neither does it say he was not. Just as the New Testament never says, "Peter then went to Rome", it never says, "Peter did not go to Rome". In fact, very little is said about where he, or any of the apostles other than Paul, *did* go in the years after the Ascension. For the most part, we have to rely on books other than the New Testament for information about what happened to the Twelve, Peter included, in later years.

But Boettner is wrong when he claims "there is no allusion to Rome in either of [Peter's] epistles". There is, in the greeting at the end of the first epistle: "The Church here in Babylon, united with you by God's election, sends you her greeting, and so does my son, Mark" (1 Pet 5:13). Babylon is a code word for Rome. It is used that way six times in the last book of the

Bible and in extra-biblical works such as *Sibylline Oracles* (5, 159f.), the *Apocalypse of Baruch* (ii, I), and *4 Esdras* (3:1). Eusebius Pamphilius, writing about 303, noted that “it is said that Peter’s first epistle, in which he makes mention of Mark, was composed at Rome itself; and that he himself indicates this, referring to the city figuratively as Babylon.”²

Consider the other New Testament citations: “A second angel followed, who cried out, Babylon, great Babylon is fallen; she who made all the nations drunk with the maddening wine of her fornication” (Rev 14:8); “The great city broke in three pieces, while the cities of the heathens came down in ruins. And God did not forget to minister a draught of his wine, his avenging anger, to Babylon, the great city” (Rev 16:19); “There was a title written over his forehead, The mystic Babylon, great mother-city of all harlots, and all that is abominable on earth” (Rev 17:5); “And he cried aloud, Babylon, great Babylon is fallen” (Rev 18:2); “Standing at a distance, for fear of sharing her punishment, they will cry out, Alas, Babylon the great, alas, Babylon the strong, in one brief hour judgment has come upon you” (Rev 18:10); “So, with one crash of ruin, will Babylon fall, the great city” (Rev 18:21).

These references cannot be to the onetime capital of the Babylonian Empire. That Babylon had been reduced to an inconsequential status by the march of years, military defeat, and political subjugation; it was no longer a “great city”. It played no important part in the recent history of the ancient world. The only truly “great city” in New Testament times was Rome.

“But there is no good reason for saying that ‘Babylon’ means ‘Rome’ ”,³ insists Boettner. But there is, and the good reason is persecution. Peter was known to the authorities as a leader of the Church, and the Church, under Roman law, was organized atheism. (The worship of any gods other than the Roman was considered atheism.) Peter would do himself, not to mention those with him, no service by advertising his presence in the capital—after all, mail service from Rome was then even worse than it is today, and letters could be intercepted easily by Roman officials. Peter was a wanted man, as were all Christian leaders. Why encourage a manhunt? In any event, let us be generous and admit that it is easy for an opponent of Catholicism to think, in good faith, that Peter was never in Rome, at least if he bases his conclusion on the Bible alone. But restricting his inquiry to the Bible is something he should not do; external evidence has to be considered, too.

William A. Jurgens, in his three-volume set *The Faith of the Early Fathers*,⁴ an easily accessible and masterly compendium that cites at length a

great number of works from the *Didache* to John Damascene, includes thirty references to this question, divided, in the index, about evenly between the statements that “Peter came to Rome and died there” and that “Peter established his See at Rome and made the Bishop of Rome his successor in the primacy.” A few examples must suffice, but they and other early references demonstrate there can be no question that the universal—and very early—position (one hesitates to use the word “tradition”, since some people read it as “legend”) was that Peter resided and was martyred in the capital of the Empire.

Dionysius of Corinth, writing to Soter, the twelfth Pope, about 170, said, “You have also, by your very admonition, brought together the planting that was made by Peter and Paul at Rome.”⁵ It was commonly accepted, from the very first, that both Peter and Paul were martyred at Rome, probably in the Neronian persecution.

A generation later Tertullian noted, “How happy is that Church . . . where Peter endured a passion like that of the Lord, where Paul was crowned in a death like John’s” ⁶ (referring to John the Baptist, as both he and Paul were beheaded). Fundamentalists admit Paul died in Rome, so the implication from Tertullian is that Peter also must have been there. In the same work Tertullian said, “This is the way in which the apostolic Churches transmit their lists: like the Church of the Smyrnaeans, which records that Polycarp was placed there by John; like the Church of the Romans, where Clement was ordained by Peter”.⁷ This Clement, known as Clement of Rome, later would be the fourth Pope. (Note that Tertullian did not say Peter consecrated Clement as Pope, which would have been impossible since a Pope does not name his own successor; he merely ordained Clement as priest.) Clement wrote his Letter to the Corinthians perhaps before 70,⁸ just a few years after Peter and Paul were killed; in it he made reference to Peter ending his life where Paul ended his.

In writing to them around 110, Ignatius of Antioch remarked he could not command the Roman Christians the way Peter and Paul once did,⁹ such a comment making sense only if Peter had been a leader, if not the leader, of the Church in Rome.

Near the end of the second century, Irenaeus mentioned that Matthew wrote his Gospel “while Peter and Paul were evangelizing in Rome and laying the foundation of the Church”. He said the two departed Rome, perhaps to attend the Council of Jerusalem, and he noted that Linus was

named as Peter's successor—that is, the second Pope—and that next in line were Anacletus (also known as Cletus) and then Clement of Rome.¹⁰

Clement of Alexandria wrote at the turn of the third century. A fragment of one of his works is preserved in Eusebius of Caesarea's *Ecclesiastical History*, the first history of the Church. Clement wrote, "When Peter preached the Word publicly at Rome, and declared the Gospel by the Spirit, many who were present requested that Mark, who had been for a long time his follower and who remembered his sayings, should write down what had been proclaimed."¹¹

Peter of Alexandria was bishop of that city and died around 311. A few years before his death he wrote a treatise on penance. In it he said, "Peter, the first chosen of the apostles, having been apprehended often and thrown into prison and treated with ignominy, at last was crucified in Rome."¹² Seven years later, Lactantius noted that "when Nero was already reigning Peter came to Rome, where, in virtue of the performance of certain miracles which he worked by that power of God which had been given to him, he converted many to righteousness and established a firm and steadfast temple to God."¹³ Nero reigned from 54 to 68.

Eusebius Pamphilius gave more precise dates than did Lactantius. He said that in 42 (he actually said the "second year of the two hundredth and fifth olympiad") "the apostle Peter, after he has established the Church in Antioch, is sent to Rome, where he remains as bishop of that city, preaching the Gospel for twenty-five years." He went on to say that "Nero is the first, in addition to all his other crimes, to make a persecution against the Christians, in which Peter and Paul died gloriously at Rome."¹⁴

These citations could be multiplied. It should be enough to note that no ancient writer claimed Peter ended his life elsewhere than in Rome. True, many refer to the fact that he was at one point in Antioch, but most go on to say he went on from there to the capital. Remember, these are the works that form the basis of Christian historical writing in the immediate post-New Testament centuries. On the question of Peter's whereabouts they are in agreement, and their cumulative testimony should carry considerable weight.

To sum up, Boettner does not know what he is talking about when he claims there is no "historical proof of any kind" and that "all rests on legend". The truth is that *all* the historical evidence is on the side of the Catholic position.

Continuing, Boettner, like other fundamentalist apologists, claims that

“exhaustive research by archaeologists has been made down through the centuries to find some inscription in the Catacombs and other ruins of ancient places in Rome that would indicate Peter at least visited Rome. But the only things found which gave any promise at all were some bones of uncertain origin.”¹⁵ Boettner saw *Roman Catholicism* through the presses in 1962. His original book and the revisions to it since have failed to mention the results of the excavations under the high altar of St. Peter’s Basilica, excavations that had been under way for decades but that were undertaken in earnest after World War II.

Pope Paul VI was able to announce officially something that had been discussed in archaeological literature and religious publications for years, that the actual tomb of the first Pope had been identified conclusively, that his remains were apparently present, and that in the vicinity of his tomb were inscriptions identifying the place as Peter’s burial site, meaning early Christians knew that the Prince of the Apostles was there. The story of how all this was determined, with scientific accuracy, is too long to recount here. It is discussed in detail in John Evangelist Walsh’s *The Bones of St. Peter*.¹⁶

It is enough to say that the combination of historical and scientific evidence is such that no one willing to look at the facts with an open mind can doubt that Peter was in Rome. To deny that fact is to let prejudice override reason. Grant, then, that Peter really was in Rome and really died and was buried there. What can be said about him, particularly from Scripture? Fundamentalists say he was just the equal of the other apostles, not their leader. He enjoyed no primacy, and he was granted by Christ no powers not given to the others.

In fact, there is ample evidence in the New Testament that Peter was first in authority among the apostles. When they were named, Peter almost always headed the list (Mt 10:1-4; Mk 3:16-19; Lk 6:14-16; Acts 1:13); sometimes it was only “Peter and his companions” (Lk 9:32). Peter was the one who generally spoke for the apostles (Mt 18:21; Mk 8:29; Lk 12:41; Jn 6:69), and he figured in many of the most dramatic scenes (Mt 14:28-32; 17:24; Mk 10:28). On Pentecost it was he who first preached to the crowds (Acts 2:14-40), and he worked the first healing (Acts 3:6-7). And to Peter came the revelation that Gentiles were to be baptized (Acts 10:46-48).

Peter’s preeminent position among the apostles was symbolized at the very beginning of his relationship with Christ, although the implications were only slowly unfolded. At their first meeting, Christ told Simon that his name

would thereafter be Peter, which translates as Rock (Jn 1:42). The startling thing was that in the Old Testament only God was called a rock. The word was never used as a proper name for a man. If one were to turn to a companion and say, "From now on your name is Asparagus", people would wonder. Why Asparagus? What is the meaning of it? What does it signify? Indeed, why Peter for Simon the fisherman? Why give him as a name a word only used for God before this moment?

Christ was not given to meaningless gestures, and neither were the Jews as a whole when it came to names. Giving a new name meant that the status of the person was changed, as when Abram was changed to Abraham (Gen 17:5); Jacob to Israel (Gen 32:28); Eliacim to Joakim (2 Kings 23:34); and Daniel, Ananias, Misael, and Azarias to Baltassar, Sidrach, Misach, and Abdenago (Dan 1:6-8). But no Jew had ever been called Rock because that was reserved for God. The Jews would give other names taken from nature, such as Barach (which means lightning; Jos 19:45), Deborah (bee; Gen 35:8), and Rachel (ewe; Gen 29:16), but not Rock. In the New Testament James and John were surnamed Boanerges, Sons of Thunder, by Christ (Mk 3:17), but that was never regularly used in place of their original names. Simon's new name supplanted the old.

Not only was there significance in Simon being given a name that had been used only to describe God, but the place where the renaming occurred was also important. "Then Jesus came into the neighborhood of Caesarea Philippi" (Mt 16:13), a city that Philip the Tetrarch built and named in honor of Caesar Augustus, who had died in A.D. 14. The city lay near cascades in the Jordan River and not far from a gigantic wall of rock two hundred feet high and five hundred feet long, part of the southern foothills of Mount Hermon.¹⁷

Caesarea Philippi is no more. Near its ruins is the small Arab town of Banias, and at the base of the rock wall may be found what is left of one of the springs that fed the Jordan. It was here that Jesus pointed to Simon and said, "Thou art Peter" (Mt 16:18). The significance of the event must have been clear to the other apostles. As devout Jews they knew at once that the location was meant to emphasize the importance of what was being done.

None complained of Simon being singled out for this honor, and in the rest of the New Testament he is called by his new name, while James and John remain just James and John, not Boanerges.

When he first saw Simon, "Jesus looked at him closely and said, 'Thou art Simon the son of Jonah; thou shalt be called Cephas' (which means the same

as Peter)” (Jn 1:42). The word Cephas is merely the transliteration of the Aramaic *Kepha* into Greek. *Kepha* means rock. Later, after Peter and the other disciples had been with Christ for some time, they went to Caesarea Philippi, where Peter made his profession of faith: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mt 16:17). Jesus told Peter that this truth was revealed to him specially, and then he reiterated: “Thou art Peter” (Mt 16:18). To this was added the promise that the Church that would be founded would, in some way, be founded on Peter (Mt 16:18).

Then two important things were told the apostle. “Whatever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; whatever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Mt 16:19). Here Peter was singled out for the authority that provides for the forgiveness of sins and the making of disciplinary rules. Later the apostles as a whole would be given similar power, but here Peter received it in a special sense; the later grant to them did not diminish the uniqueness of what was granted Peter. Indeed, Peter alone was promised something else. “I will give to thee [singular] the keys to the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 16:19). In ancient times keys were the hallmark of authority. A walled city might have one great gate and that gate one great lock worked by one great key. To be given the key to the city (an honor that exists even today, although its import is largely lost) meant to be given free access to and authority over the city. The city to which Peter was given the keys was the heavenly city itself. This symbolism for authority is used elsewhere in the Bible (Is 22:22; Rev 1:18).

Finally, after the Resurrection, Jesus appeared to his disciples and asked Peter three times, “Dost thou love me?” (Jn 21:15-17). In expiation of his threefold denial, Peter gave a threefold affirmation of love. Then Christ, who is the Good Shepherd (Jn 10:11, 14), gave Peter all the authority he earlier promised: “Feed my sheep” (Jn 21:17). Thus was completed the prediction made just before Jesus and his followers went for the last time to Olivet.

Immediately before his denials were predicted, Peter was told, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has claimed power over you all, so that he can sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for thee [singular], that thy faith may not fail; when, after a while, thou hast come back to me [after the denials], it is for thee to be the support of thy brethren” (Lk 22:31-32). Christ prayed that Peter would have faith that would never fail, that he would be a guide for the others, and Christ’s prayer, being perfectly efficacious, was sure to be fulfilled. Here we see the roots of papal infallibility and the primacy that is

the Bishop of Rome's.

Now take a closer look at the key verse: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church" (Mt 16:18). Disputes about this line have always concerned the meaning of the term rock. To whom, or to what, does it refer? Since Simon's fresh name of Peter itself means rock, the sentence could be rewritten as: "Thou art Rock and upon this rock I will build my Church." The play on words seems obvious, but commentators wishing to avoid what follows from this—the establishment of the papacy—have suggested that the word rock could not refer to Peter but must refer to his profession of faith or to Christ.

According to the rules of grammar, the phrase "this rock" must relate to the closest noun. Peter's profession of faith ("Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God") is two verses earlier, while his name, a proper noun, is in the immediately preceding clause. As an analogy, consider this artificial sentence: "I have a car and a truck, and it is blue." Which is blue? The truck, because that is the noun closest to the pronoun "it". This identification would be even clearer if the reference to the car were two sentences earlier, as the reference to Peter's profession is two sentences earlier than the term rock.

The same kind of objection applies to the argument that the rock is Christ himself, since he is mentioned within the profession of faith. The fact that he is elsewhere, by a different metaphor, called the cornerstone (Eph 2:20; 1 Pet 2:4-8) does not disprove that here Peter is the foundation. Christ is naturally the principal and, since he will be returning to heaven, the invisible foundation of the Church that will be established, but Peter is named by him as the secondary and, because he and his successors will remain on earth, the visible foundation. Peter can be a foundation only because first Christ is one.

There is another analogy. At times we ask our friends to pray for us, and we pray for them. Our prayers ask God for special help for one another. When we pray in this way, what are we doing? We are acting as mediators, as go-betweens. We are approaching God on someone else's behalf. Does this contradict Paul's statement that Christ is the one mediator (1 Tim 2:5)? No, because our mediatorship is entirely secondary to and dependent on his. He could have established his mediatorship in any way he chose, and he chose to have us participate when he commanded us to pray for one another (Mt 5:44; 1 Tim 2:1-4; Rom 15:30; Acts 12:5), even for the dead (2 Tim 1:16-18). So, just as there can be secondary mediators and a primary one, there can be a secondary foundation and a primary one.

Opponents of the Catholic interpretation of Matthew 16:18 also note that in the Greek text the name of the apostle is *Petros*, a masculine noun, while rock is rendered as *petra*, which is feminine. The first means a small stone, the second a massive rock. If Peter was meant to be the massive rock, the steady foundation of the Church here below, why is his name not *Petra*? As Loraine Boettner puts it in *Roman Catholicism*, “The Greek *petros* is commonly used of a small, movable stone, a mere pebble, as it were. But *petra* means an immovable foundation, in this instance, the basic truth that Peter had just confessed, the deity of Christ.”¹⁸ The Bible is clear on this point: Peter was no sure foundation.

Boettner continues by saying, “Had Christ intended to say that the Church would be founded on Peter, it would have been ridiculous for Him to have shifted to the feminine form of the word in the middle of the statement, saying, if we may translate literally and somewhat whimsically, ‘And I say unto thee, that thou art Mr. Rock, and upon this, the Miss Rock, I will build my church.’ . . . He made two complete, distinct statements. He said, ‘Thou art Peter,’ and, ‘Upon this rock (change of gender, indicating change of subject) I will build my church.’ ”¹⁹ Boettner’s “whimsy” obscures the straightforward solution to this problem.

The first thing to note is that Christ did not speak to the disciples in Greek. (And not Hebrew, either, which was reserved as a sacred language and was not in common use, somewhat analogously to the way Latin, in the recent past, was the sacred language for Catholics, but was not used by them in everyday speech.) Christ spoke Aramaic, the common language of Palestine at the time. In that language the word for rock is *kepha*. What was said was thus: “Thou art *Kepha*, and upon this *kepha* I will build my Church.” When Matthew’s Gospel was translated from the original Aramaic to Greek,²⁰ there arose a problem that did not confront the evangelist when he first composed his account of Christ’s life in his native tongue.

In Aramaic the word *kepha* has the same ending whether it refers to a rock or is used as a man’s name. In Greek, though, the word for rock, *petra*, is feminine in gender. The translator could use it for the second appearance of *kepha* in the sentence, but not for the first, because it would be inappropriate to give a man a feminine name. So he put a masculine ending on it, and there was *Petros*, which happened to be a preexisting word meaning a small stone. Some of the effect of the play on words was lost, but that was the best that could be done in Greek. In English, as in Aramaic, there is no problem with

endings, so an English rendering could read: “Thou art Rock, and upon this rock I will build my church.” In modern French Bibles, the word *pierre* appears in both places. The real meaning is hard to miss.

Another point: If the rock really did refer to Christ, as fundamentalists claim (basing their argument on 1 Corinthians 10:4, “and the rock was Christ”), why did Matthew leave the passage as it was? In the original Aramaic, and in the English that is a closer parallel to it than is the Greek, the passage seems clear enough. Matthew must have realized that his readers would conclude the obvious from “Rock . . . rock”. If he meant Christ to be understood as the rock, why did he not say so? Why did he construct his sentences so awkwardly that contortions would be required to elicit the fundamentalist interpretation? Why did he take a chance and leave it up to Paul to write a clarifying text (presuming, of course, that 1 Corinthians was written after Matthew, as most biblical scholars assert; if it came first, it could not have been written to clarify it)?

The reason, of course, is that Matthew knew full well that what the sentence seemed to say was just what it really was saying. It was Simon—weak, Christ-denying Simon—who was chosen to be the first link in the chain of the papacy. The scandal, to fundamentalists, is that Christ would choose as his Vicar the weakest of the apostles, not the strongest. But God seems to enjoy working through the lowly in order to confound the mighty, and his choice of Peter was quite in keeping with other selections he had made, such as deciding to be born in a stable rather than a palace. In a way, it was Peter’s weakness that would manifest the strength of the papacy. After all, noted G. K. Chesterton when writing of the succession of popes, a chain is only as strong as its weakest link.²¹

Still, however apt Chesterton’s comment might be, a fundamentalist will not see it as supporting the Catholic position since it presumes the divine establishment of the papacy. His mind will turn, instead, to snatches of ecclesiastical history he has imbibed from visiting preachers or from anti-Catholic literature. What will stick in his mind is the claim that the papacy has achieved its position of authority through purely human machinations. Providence, he has been told, had nothing to do with it.

This is the theme of Henry T. Hudson’s *Papal Power*,²² published in an attractive paperback format in England, but printed and distributed in America. This may be the most exhaustive look at the papacy to come from the hands of a fundamentalist in recent years. In five chapters Hudson

examines the “origins of papal power”, the development of the papacy before the Reformation, Luther’s attack on the papacy, the further development of the institution after the Reformation, and papal claims in light of Scripture. (The chapter on Luther really does not focus on the Reformer’s analysis of the papacy; it is better described as plain hagiography.)

In the introduction Hudson comments on the 1979 visit of John Paul II to the United States and asks, “Whatever happened to the traditional anti-papal sentiments common in American history?”²³ In a footnote he points out that Loraine Boettner has said that two-thirds of the American population in 1776 was Reformed Protestant. Hudson longs for the good old days.

His appreciations of ecclesiastical history and biblical criticism are not without weaknesses. He believes, for instance, that the papacy was supremely strong during the Middle Ages, when in fact the Popes were at the mercy of princes and were largely ignored by irreformable bishops and persnickety abbots. He thinks Rome was without influence in the earliest ecumenical councils, when in fact the popes sent legates and formally approved the councils’ decisions. With respect to Peter’s presence in Rome, Hudson thinks Paul’s statement that “only Luke is with me” (2 Tim 4:11) settles the matter. “This is conclusive.”²⁴ If it is, it is *too* conclusive. If the line proves Peter was not in Rome, it also proves no Christians, other than Luke and Paul, were there. Yet Paul wrote an epistle to the Christians in Rome, who apparently were numerous. Were they all out of town when 2 Timothy was written? If so, why was Luke still around?

When the interpretation of Matthew 16:18 is the question, Hudson is satisfied to say, “A simple, straightforward consideration of the grammatical construction seems to rule out Peter as the *petra*.”²⁵ If he is to be satisfied with simple, straightforward grammatical constructions, why no mention of the Aramaic, which is even simpler than the Greek and which states: “Thou art *Kepha*, and upon this *kepha* I will build my Church”? This seems to say the rock is Peter, but Hudson makes no allusion to the Catholic arguments.

His book’s key contention, what distinguishes it from other anti-Catholic works (not because other anti-Catholics would disagree, but because few of them bother to discuss the matter), is that the papacy obtained its exalted position through fraud. Hudson discusses at length forgeries on which the Popes supposedly built their power. It is quite true there were forgeries, and they were used, long after the events they purport to describe, to bolster Rome’s position, but commentators of almost all stripes, save the

fundamentalist, agree the forgeries had little or no practical effect. The papacy already was established firmly when the forgeries first appeared, and documents such as the Donation of Constantine and the False Decretals added little to the status of the institution. Granted, it was imprudent for any Church official to base an argument on them, and Lorenzo Valla's *Discourse on the Forgery of the Alleged Donation of Constantine*, which appeared in 1440, made many scholars look incompetent, but the fact remains that the papacy would have been what it was with or without the forgeries. They had far less effect on the institution than Parson Weems' biography had on the American public's perception of George Washington.

The curious thing is that, although Hudson decries forgeries used by partisans of Rome, he says nothing against forgeries used by Hudson. The last seventeen pages of the book are nothing less than the complete transcript of the speech said to have been given by Bishop Josip Strossmayer at Vatican I in 1870. Hudson does not defend the speech against the charges that it is a forgery; he does not even imply that he knows of such charges. He accepts the speech's bona fides unquestioningly.

In doing so he demonstrates that while fundamentalists can produce tracts, newsletters, and even books in quantity, they rarely make any effort to test their claims against the Catholic version of the facts. They do not seem to know there *is* a Catholic version. How simple it would be to open the *Catholic Encyclopedia* and see, in the article on Strossmayer, that the speech attributed to him is a forgery. No one is obligated to accept the article writer's word for it, but sources are given, and with a little legwork the sources can be checked. But checking is not something professional anti-Catholics are inclined to do. They are not so much interested in accuracy as in effect.

Chapter 18

Infallibility of the Pope

Pretend for a moment a Pope is infallible not only in matters of faith or morals, but in trigonometry. He is presented with an examination consisting of one hundred trigonometry problems. What is the *least* number of problems he will answer correctly?

Someone who says “one hundred” may understand trigonometry, but his understanding of infallibility is no better than the average non-Catholic’s. The correct answer is: zero. Although infallible in trigonometry, the Pope might get none of the problems right. Being infallible in trigonometry would mean being prevented from putting down the wrong answers. It would not mean being able to put down the right ones. The answer sheet could be left entirely blank—and would be, if the Pope had not done his homework.

It is the same in real life. Through the guardianship of the Holy Spirit, the Pope is guaranteed not to teach error regarding faith or morals (presuming, of course, he intends to make an *ex cathedra* statement and is not speaking as a private scholar). But he cannot teach what is true unless he first knows what is true, and he learns that the same way we do.

Catholics who fail this quiz may appreciate why nearly all fundamentalists misunderstand infallibility. They do not know what infallibility means. Most of them hear “infallibility” and think “impeccability”. They think Catholics believe the Pope cannot sin. Those who do not make that elementary blunder imagine the Pope operates like Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, who claimed to have at one time the Old Testament’s Urim and Thummim. Smith repaired to his oracle to translate the Book of Mormon from the golden plates, or so he said, and most non-Catholics think the Pope relies on some sort of amulet or magical incantation when an infallible definition is due. Given this, it might be too much to expect the average fundamentalist to understand the niceties of infallibility. The first thing he would have to perceive (after being told the subject concerns the absence of error, not of sin) is that infallibility belongs to the body of bishops as a whole, when, in moral

unity, they teach a doctrine as true. “He who listens to you, listens to me” (Lk 10:16); “all that you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven” (Mt 18:18). Vatican II put it this way:

Although the individual bishops do not enjoy the prerogative of infallibility, they can nevertheless proclaim Christ’s doctrine infallibly. This is so, even when they are dispersed around the world, provided that while maintaining the bond of unity among themselves and with Peter’s successor, and while teaching authentically on a matter of faith or morals, they concur in a single viewpoint as the one which must be held conclusively. This authority is even more clearly verified when, gathered together in an ecumenical council, they are teachers and judges of faith and morals for the universal Church. Their definitions must then be adhered to with the submission of faith.

Infallibility belongs in a special way to the Pope as the head of the bishops (Mt 16:17-19; Jn 21:15-17) and is something he

enjoys in virtue of his office, when, as the supreme shepherd and teacher of all the faithful, who confirms his brethren in their faith (cf. Luke 22:32), he proclaims by a definitive act some doctrine of faith or morals. Therefore his definitions, of themselves, and not from the consent of the Church, are justly held irreformable, for they are pronounced with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, an assistance promised to him in blessed Peter.¹

The infallibility of the Pope is certainly a doctrine that has developed, but it is not one that sprang out of nowhere in 1870. It is implicit in these Petrine texts: John 21:15-17 (“Feed my sheep. . .”); Luke 22:32 (“I have prayed for thee that thy faith may not fail”); Matthew 16:18 (“Thou art Peter. . .”). Christ instructed the Church to preach the good news (Mt 28; 19-20) and promised the protection of the Holy Spirit “to guide you into all truth” (Jn 16:13). That mandate and that promise guarantee that the Church will never fall away from his teachings (1 Tim 3:15), even if individual Catholics might. The inability of the Church to teach error is infallibility, and it is a negative protection. It means what is officially taught will not be wrong, not that the official teachers will have the wits about them to stand up and teach what is right when it needs to be taught.

As Christians got clearer and clearer notions of the teaching authority of the whole Church and of the primacy of the Pope, they got clearer notions of the Pope’s own infallibility. This happened early on. In 433 Pope Sixtus III declared that to assent to the Bishop of Rome’s decision is to assent to Peter, who lives in his successors and whose faith does not fail.² Cyprian of Carthage, writing about 256, asked: “Would heretics dare to come to the very seat of Peter whence apostolic faith is derived and whither no errors can

come?”³ Augustine of Hippo summed up the ancient attitude when he remarked, “Rome has spoken; the case is closed.”⁴

Leslie Rumble and Charles M. Carty, the famed radio priests of two generations ago, put it this way:

Before the definition of infallibility in 1870, the Popes did not know they were infallible with the same full certainty of faith as that possessed by later Popes. But they were infallible in fact. The gift of papal infallibility was essential to the Church, not the definition of the gift. You wonder why it was defined only in 1870. But definitions are not given unnecessarily. If no discussion arises on a given point, and no one disputes it, there is no need for a definition. But in the seventeenth century the question of the Pope’s doctrinal authority came more and more to the front, until in 1870, the Vatican Council was asked to settle the question once and for all. The time had come for the Church to know herself fully on this point.⁵

An infallible papal pronouncement is made only when some doctrine is called into question. Most have never been doubted by the vast majority of Catholics, although, at any one time, one could find someone to discount nearly any belief. Pick up a catechism and look at the great number of doctrines, most of which have never been formally defined by an *ex cathedra* papal statement. There are, in fact, few topics on which it would be possible for the Pope to make an infallible decision without seconding infallible pronouncements from some other source, such as an ecumenical council or the unanimous teaching of the Fathers.⁶

At least the outline, if not the text references, of the preceding paragraphs should be familiar to literate Catholics, to whom this subject should seem reasonably straightforward. It is a different story for fundamentalists. For them papal infallibility seems a muddle because their idea of what it covers is muddled.

Joseph Zacchello, ordained a priest in Italy and sent to the United States to serve Italian-Americans, converted to “Bible Christianity” in 1944. Four years later he published *Secrets of Romanism*. Because of the resurgence of anti-Catholic sentiment, the book has been reprinted recently. Zacchello argues against papal infallibility on the ground that it “is powerless to prevent divisions. Popes have anathematized other Popes, Councils have contradicted Councils, and doctors of theology have violently opposed other doctors.” Besides, he notes, “the Roman Church often had two Popes; and once there were three rival Popes at one time (the Great Western Schism 1378—1417).”⁷

This is confusing—and inaccurate. No Catholic ever claimed papal

infallibility would “prevent divisions”. Yes, some Popes have contradicted other Popes, in their private opinions or with respect to disciplinary rulings, but never has any Pope officially contradicted what an earlier Pope officially taught about faith or morals. The same may be said about ecumenical councils, which also teach infallibly. No ecumenical council has ever contradicted the teaching of an earlier ecumenical council on faith or morals. Have “doctors of theology . . . violently opposed other doctors”? Of course, but Catholics do not hold that theologians are infallible, so disagreement between them is immaterial, and certainly the fact that they may disagree with one another says nothing about the existence of papal infallibility.

Consider Zacchello’s misleading comment about the Great Western Schism, What happened was this. In 1378 Urban VI was lawfully elected Pope. Some cardinals thought he was not properly elected, so they elected another man, Clement VII. There were good men on both sides, supporters of each claimant honestly thinking they were backing the real Pope. No one imagined there could be two Popes at once. To settle the dispute, another group of cardinals exceeded their rights and declared both Urban and Clement deposed. They elected still a third claimant, Alexander V. All this time, Urban was the authentic Pope. Eventually he died, as did his rivals. Urban’s third successor was Gregory XII. In order to end the confusion, which by this time had lasted nearly forty years, a council was convened, and Gregory resigned. The successors to Clement and Alexander were declared to have been improperly elected, and a new Pope, Martin V, was elected. In all these years there was never any question about there being more than one Pope; there was only a mistake among the faithful regarding who was the legitimate successor to the Prince of the Apostles.

It is at least as bad with Ralph Woodrow, author of *Babylon Mystery Religion*. He says, “People naturally question how infallibility could be linked with the papal office when some of the popes had been very poor examples in morals and integrity.” But he at once recognizes that he is confusing infallibility with impeccability, so he covers himself by saying, “And if the infallibility be applied only to doctrines pronounced by the popes, how was it that some popes disagreed with other popes?”⁸ He wants to have it both ways; he gets more mileage out of his argument if the reader thinks infallibility and impeccability are identical, but he makes allowances for some readers knowing the difference.

After recounting the admittedly bizarre case of Pope Formosus, whose

corpse was disinterred and placed in the dock during a posthumous trial, Woodrow claims “such sharp disagreement between popes certainly argues against the ideal of papal infallibility”,⁹ This evinces a basic confusion, since the issue must always be phrased this way: Have two popes disagreed when officially teaching on faith or morals? The Formosus case had nothing to do with any such teaching or any such disagreement.

Formosus had been the bishop of Porto, and he was elected Pope at a time when it was considered improper for a bishop to transfer from one see to another. This was merely a disciplinary rule and did not invalidate his election. His second successor, Stephen VII, prompted by the emperor, Lambert, found it politically expedient to declare that Formosus had become Pope improperly and that his ordinations were consequently invalid. Thus the trial. Formosus was found “guilty”, and his ordinations were declared null. So, there certainly was a disagreement (if that is the proper word) between Formosus, by then dead, and Stephen, but the posthumous trial, no matter how repugnant, had nothing to do with a definition regarding faith or morals, so the question of papal infallibility simply does not apply.

Woodrow continues by pointing out that “Pope Sixtus V had a version of the Bible prepared which he declared to be authentic. Two years later Pope Clement VIII declared that it was full of errors and ordered another to be made!”¹⁰ And he says, “When we consider the hundreds of times and ways that popes have contradicted each other over the centuries, we can understand how the idea of papal infallibility is difficult for many people to accept. While it is true that most papal statements are not made within the narrow confines of the 1870 *ex cathedra* definition, yet if popes have erred in so many other ways, how can we believe they are guaranteed a divine infallibility for a few moments if and when they should indeed decide to speak *ex cathedra*?”¹¹

It is unsurprising that Woodrow ends his chapter on papal infallibility with an exercise in numerology, noting that “as early as 1612 it was pointed out, as Andreas Helwig did in his book *Roman Antichrist*, that the title ‘Vicar of Christ’ has a numerical value of 666.” When written as “Vicar of the Son of God”, *Vicarius Filii Dei*, the letters sum to 666, if the Roman values are used. “The number reminds us, of course, of Revelation 13:18, ‘Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore and six.’ ”

There are several things wrong with this argument. *Vicarius Filii Dei* never

has been used as a title by any Pope. The Pope's full title is Bishop of Rome, Vicar of Jesus Christ [or, more simply, Vicar of Christ—*Vicarius Christi*], Successor of the Prince of the Apostles, Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church, Patriarch of the West, Primate of Italy, Archbishop and Metropolitan of the Roman Province, and Sovereign of the City of the Vatican.

Latin, like most other ancient languages, used letters to represent numbers. The letters of *Vicarius Filii Dei* do indeed add up to 666. The letters of *Vicarius Christi* do not. Anti-Catholic pundits, unable to use *Vicarius Christi*—the Pope's real title—to their advantage, turn to a similar-sounding title and claim—voila!—that the Pope is the beast.¹²

In doing this, these opponents of Catholicism overlook an important fact. The last book of the Bible was written in Greek, not Latin. We should expect “the number of the beast” to be understood through Greek numerology, not Latin. The name or title that totals 666 should be based on Greek. But there is a way that Latin figures in, although it does not help the anti-Catholics' argument.

By the end of the second century there were in circulation manuscripts that gave “the number of the beast” as 616 instead of 666. Why this discrepancy? Apparently there was confusion on the part of one or more copyists, and that confusion gives credence to the most widely accepted theory about the identity of the beast, that the beast was Nero Caesar,

The Greek form of his name in Hebrew letters is *nrwn qsr*. Each letter stands for a number (n = 30, r = 200, w = 6, q = 100, s = 60), Adding up the letters (50 + 200 + 6 + 50 + 100 + 60 + 200) yields 666. The Latin form of his name, when given in Hebrew letters, is slightly different: *nrw qsr*. Its letters total 616, the alternative reading of the manuscripts. It may have been natural for copyists whose mother tongue was Latin, knowing the reference was to Nero, to presume 666 was an error and that 616 was the true number. They may have “corrected” what they perceived to be an error. So we see the earliest manuscripts giving 666 and some later manuscripts—copied when Latin had become the lingua franca of the Mediterranean—giving 616.

Not only does Nero's name work out arithmetically, and not only does identifying him as the beast account for the manuscript evidence, but he fits the context of Revelation. He was the first emperor to persecute Christians, and he would have been the perfect choice for the beast. So vigorous were his persecutions, in fact, that it was rumored Nero came to life again in one of his successors, Domitian, who was also a persecutor. Domitian was known as

Nero redivivus.

In any event, whatever the real identity of the beast, Ralph Woodrow gives no good reason for tying the number 666 to the papacy. The best he can do is to use a misrepresentation as a proof. Like other anti-Catholics, he so desperately wants the beast to be identified with the papacy that he does not bother to stick with the facts.

But Woodrow and his arguments are too easy to dismiss. The best attack by a fundamentalist is given, as usual, by Loraine Boettner in his *Roman Catholicism*. As mentioned in a previous chapter, he begins with a error large even by his standard. “Infallibility is not claimed for every statement made by the pope,” he says, “but only for those made when he is speaking *ex cathedra*, that is, seated in his papal chair, the chair of St. Peter, and speaking in his official capacity as head of the church,”¹³ At this point an asterisk leads one to a footnote that states that the chair venerated as Peter’s comes from the ninth century and is of French origin. “It is not an antique of the first century”, the point being, apparently, that even if papal infallibility were theoretically possible, it is not possible in practice since today’s Popes are unable to sit in Peter’s actual chair.

Chair or no chair, Popes keep publishing their decisions, and Boettner has to deal with that fact. “It is interesting to notice that the popes, in issuing their decrees or pronouncements, do not label them *ex cathedra* or not *ex cathedra*. We may be sure that if this power were a reality they would not hesitate so to label them, that in fact they would find it very advantageous to do so. Surely it would be of inestimable value to know which deliverances are *ex cathedra* and which are not, which are infallible and authoritative and which are only private observations and therefore as fallible as those of anyone else.”¹⁴ Boettner’s appreciation of human nature is modest. To insert in all noninfallible pronouncements a note that “this is *not ex cathedra*” would be to invite everyone to commit Boettner’s error, which is to think the Pope’s noninfallible teachings are “therefore as fallible as those of anyone else”. Precisely because the Pope “does his homework”, and because of the way he prepares his statements, and because he is who he is, they are far less likely to be fallible—that is, wrong—than those given by others. The Pope speaks not off the top of his head, but from a tradition of right teaching.

The author of *Roman Catholicism* is unable to resist quoting a famous Catholic historian: “How true the words of England’s Lord Acton, himself a Roman Catholic, who after visiting Rome and seeing at firsthand the

workings of the papacy wrote: ‘All power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.’ ”¹⁵ First of all, Boettner gives the standard misquotation. Acton actually said, “Power *tends* to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” He wrote this in a letter to Anglican Bishop Mandell Creighton on April 5, 1887, long after Vatican I. Second, Boettner fantasizes that Acton had the same kind of shock Martin Luther supposedly had when the monk first visited Rome, but Acton was long familiar with the place. Besides, his aphorism was in reference not just to Popes, but to kings and all men in positions of authority. To imply he was limiting his comment to the papacy, to suggest he was indicating rejection of papal infallibility, is to give a false impression of what he was saying.

Nevertheless, Boettner is far more accurate than Woodrow: “The doctrine of papal infallibility does not mean that the pope is infallible as a man. It does not relate to his personal habits. It does not mean that he is sinless. Nor does it mean that he is inspired as were the apostles so that he can write Scripture.” So far he is correct. But he immediately goes wrong, though not as egregiously as others: “It means rather that in his official capacity as teacher of the church he has the guidance of the Holy Spirit so that he can interpret and state clearly and positively doctrines which allegedly have been a part of the heritage of the church from the beginning.”¹⁶ Boettner does not quite grasp what infallibility covers. He does not understand that it is a negative protection and that a Pope too lazy to do his homework would not be able to make an infallible decision on anything. The charism of infallibility does not help a Pope know what is true, nor does it “inspire” him to teach what is true.

Boettner also errs, somewhat more subtly, in saying that “for centuries before the doctrine of papal infallibility was adopted there was much difference of opinion as to where that infallibility lay. . . . But in 1870 it was declared to reside in the pope alone, and all good Catholics are now compelled to accept that view.”¹⁷ Vatican I did not say infallibility resides in the Pope alone, for the very good reason that it resides also in the bishops teaching in union with the Pope.

As a biblical example of the fallibility of Popes, Boettner gives this: “That Peter, the alleged first pope, was not infallible as a teacher of faith and morals is evident from his conduct at Antioch when he refused to eat with Gentile Christians lest he offend certain Jews from Palestine (Gal. 2:11-16). Instead, he would have fastened the ritual requirements of Judaism on the new Christian church. This should have been no problem at all for him if he had

the special guidance of the Holy Spirit claimed by the Church of Rome for the pope.”¹⁸ Here Boettner imagines infallibility to be something like inspiration, and, like other fundamentalist writers, he never seems to apply to particular cases the standards of Vatican I. It may be because he, like his followers, confuses doctrine and morals with discipline and customs. Peter’s conduct at Antioch was not an attempt by him to teach formally on doctrine or morals.

Boettner caps his attack with a commentary on John Henry Newman. “It is well known that Cardinal Newman was strongly opposed to the promulgation of the doctrine of infallibility.” That much is true, but with the next sentence Boettner goes awry. “But having left the Church of England in order to join the Roman Church and having given it such fulsome praise, he was powerless to prevent the change and did not have the courage to come back out of it. . . . It was a bitter pill for Newman to swallow, but he submitted and acknowledged papal infallibility.”¹⁹ There are two things wrong with this analysis (or psychoanalysis). First, the implication that doctrine was being changed. It was not; it was just being made explicit. This point one can let slide. The libel of Newman is another thing altogether. Boettner apparently never read, or if he read he quickly forgot, the seventh part of Newman’s *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, the part titled “General Answer to Mr. Kingsley”. It is here that Newman examined infallibility. He wrote in 1864—six years before the definition given at Vatican I—about a problem that he wrestled with before his conversion in 1845.

Boettner will have us think Newman had no suspicion that papal infallibility might be a fact and, when it appeared that it would be proclaimed, he found that he had converted for the worse. Even if this were a true account of Newman’s thinking, which it is not, why did Newman not leave the Catholic Church if he thought papal infallibility nonexistent? After all, in 1845 he left the secure and socially acceptable established church for what in England was the inconsequential and outcast Roman Catholic Church. Reconverting would have been easy by comparison, particularly if he could refer to some papal usurpation. Why didn’t he? Because he not only accepted papal infallibility, he believed in it—and had since before he had become a Catholic. He opposed not the content of the definition given at Vatican I, but the wisdom of promulgating the definition at that time; he thought the promulgation was inopportune, not inaccurate.

Like other anti-Catholic writers, Boettner cites a number of “errors of the

popes”. With respect to what he identifies as doctrinal matters, he lists a dozen instances, most of which have nothing to do with the question at hand. For instance: “Zozimus (417—418) pronounced Pelagius an orthodox teacher, but later reversed his position at the insistence of Augustine.”²⁰ This demonstrates nothing more than that Augustine provided Zozimus with additional information on Pelagius, so the Pope had a more complete appreciation of the man’s doctrines. Besides, declaring a particular individual orthodox or unorthodox is simply not an attempted exercise of infallibility. Continuing, Boettner asks, “How is the decree of Clement XIV (July 21, 1773) suppressing the Jesuits to be harmonized with the contrary decree of Pius VII (August 7, 1814) restoring them?”²¹ Again, neither decree had anything to do with teaching faith or morals; each was purely a disciplinary matter.

Boettner’s argument is really reduced to three cases, those of Popes Liberius, Vigilius, and Honorius, the three cases to which all opponents of papal infallibility repair because they are the only cases that do not collapse as soon as they are mentioned. None of the instances can be shoehorned into the 1870 definition.

Boettner claims “Liberius, in 358, subscribed to a heretical Arian creed in order to gain the bishopric of Rome under the heretical emperor Constantius.”²² If Liberius did this—which, apparently, he did not—it would prove nothing, since his subscribing to a heresy *before* becoming Pope could have nothing to do with an exercise of papal infallibility. Infallibility is not retroactive. Election to the papacy does not validate a man’s earlier teachings.

Most commentators who bring up Liberius, it must be said, make a charge different from Boettner’s. They say Liberius subscribed to a heretical formula while he was Pope. In fact what he put his signature to was an ambiguous document that could be understood in either an orthodox or a heretical manner. When he did this he was not a free agent, since he had been forced into exile by the emperor. Even if the document had been strictly heretical, admitting of no orthodox interpretation, and even if Liberius signed it voluntarily, the issue of infallibility still would not have arisen since he signed only as a private theologian and was not signing something that purported to be a teaching that was to be held by all Christians. The requirements for an infallible papal teaching simply were not met.

Vigilius, Boettner says, “refused to condemn certain heretical teachers of the time of the Monophysite controversy and boycotted the fifth Ecumenical

Council which met at Constantinople in 553. When the Council proceeded without him and threatened to excommunicate and anathematize him, he submitted to its opinions, confessing that he had been a tool of Satan.”²³ This misses the sense of what really happened. Emperor Justinian published a decree condemning the writings of three men long dead. Their writings were known as the Three Chapters, and the heresy to which they subscribed was Nestorianism, which held that in Christ there are two persons joined together, God the Son and the man Jesus. (The orthodox doctrine is that there is only one Person in Christ, the divine, but two natures.) Justinian’s decree was designed to please the Monophysites. Monophysitism was a heresy that arose as a reaction to Nestorianism; it held that in Christ there is only one nature, the divine. The decree was signed by the Eastern patriarchs, but other bishops objected, saying the decree undermined the orthodox position by seeming to favor Monophysitism by default. At first Vigilius refused to condemn the Three Chapters, but in 548 he did, at the same time affirming the orthodox position. Later he retracted his condemnation. He continued to vacillate, and the ecumenical council was called. The council condemned the Three Chapters, and finally Vigilius gave in, joining in the condemnation. Throughout all this, he supported the orthodox position. The controversy concerned the expediency of condemning certain writings and of judging three men who had long since been judged by God. Vigilius intended to condemn only what was condemnable in the Three Chapters, not what was orthodox. The drawn-out incident is certainly confusing, but it gives no support to the anti-infallibility position since Vigilius never asserted that a heretical belief was to be believed as true.

Then comes the last of the three standard cases, According to an authority Boettner cites, “The greatest scandal of this nature is pope Honorius. He specifically taught the Monothelite heresy in two letters to the patriarch of Constantinople.”²⁴ (Monothelitism arose as a reaction to Monophysitism. It held that in Christ there is only one will, the divine. The orthodox position is that in him there are two wills, the divine and the human, but the two wills are in perfect harmony.)

Actually, Honorius elected to teach nothing at all. Ronald Knox, in a letter to Arnold Lunn reprinted in their book *Difficulties*, put the matter like this: “And Honorius, so far from pronouncing an infallible opinion in the Monothelite controversy, was ‘quite extraordinarily not’ (as Gore used to say) pronouncing a decision at all. To the best of his human wisdom, he

thought the controversy ought to be left unsettled, for the greater peace of the Church. In fact, he was an inopportunist. We, wise after the event, say that he was wrong. But nobody, I think, has ever claimed that the Pope is infallible in *not* defining a doctrine.”²⁵

Summing up, Knox asked Lunn, “Has it ever occurred to you how few are the alleged ‘failures of infallibility’? I mean, if somebody propounded in your presence the thesis that all the kings of England have been impeccable, you would not find yourself murmuring, ‘Oh, well, people said rather unpleasant things about Jane Shore . . . and the best historians seem to think that Charles II spent too much of his time with Nell Gwynn.’ Here have these Popes been, fulminating anathema after anathema for centuries—certain in all human probability to contradict themselves or one another over again. Instead of which you get this measly crop of two or three alleged failures!”²⁶ He acknowledged that this does not prove infallibility, but it does make the anti-infallibility argument look weak.

After examining alleged failures relating to definitions of faith, Boettner looks at “infallibility in the moral sphere” and immediately stumbles. He forgets what he quoted from Vatican I a few pages earlier and considers cases that speak not against infallibility, but against impeccability. He cites a few well-worn instances of papal immorality, naming Popes John XI, John XII, and Alexander VI, but he mentions not one incorrect papal ruling on a question of morals. If a Pope proclaims *ex cathedra* that lying is a sin and then immediately tells a lie, infallibility is not disproved, although that Pope’s impeccability certainly is. For infallibility to be disproved, Boettner would have to show an *ex cathedra* definition stating that lying is moral. He offers no such example, or anything parallel, because none exists.

Fundamentalists’ rejection of papal infallibility stems from their view of the Church. They do not think Christ established a visible Church, which means they do not believe in a hierarchy of bishops headed by the Pope. This is no place to give an elaborate demonstration of the establishment of a visible Church. It is enough to note that the New Testament shows the apostles setting up, after their Master’s instructions, a visible organization, and every Christian writer in the early centuries—in fact, nearly all Christians until the Reformation—took it for granted that Christ set up an ongoing organization.

If he did, he must have provided for its continuation; for its easy identification (that is, it had to be visible so it could be found); and, since he

would be gone from Earth, for some method by which it could preserve intact all his teachings. All this was effected through the apostolic succession of bishops, and the preservation of the Christian message, in its fullness, was guaranteed through the gift of infallibility—of the Church as a whole, but mainly as enjoyed by the temporal head of the Church, the Pope.

The Holy Spirit prevents a Pope from officially teaching error, and this charism follows, necessarily, from the existence of the Church itself. If the Church is to do what Christ said it would—and not do what he said it would not do, such as have the gates of hell prevail against it—then it must be able to teach infallibly. It must prove itself to be a perfectly steady guide in matters pertaining to salvation. There is no guarantee that any particular Pope will not let slip by chances to teach the truth, or that he will be sinless, or that mere disciplinary decisions will be intelligently made. It would be convenient if he were omniscient or impeccable, but his not being so will not subvert the Church. But he must be able to teach rightly, for that is the main function of the Church. For men to be saved, they must know what is to be believed. They must have a perfectly steady rock to build on when it comes to official teaching, and that is why papal infallibility exists.

Chapter 19

The Eucharist

Fundamentalist attacks on the Church always come around, as they must, to the Eucharist. Keith Green devoted the first of his *Catholic Chronicles* to what he acknowledged to be the core devotional doctrine of Catholics, and he was smart to do so. Bart Brewer, Donald F. Maconaghie, Jimmy Swaggart—they all zero in on the Eucharist, and in doing so they demonstrate that fundamentalists, contrary to popular belief, are not always literalists. This is shown in their interpretation of the key scriptural passage, the sixth chapter of John's Gospel, in which Christ speaks about the sacrament that will be instituted at the Last Supper.

The narrative opens on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee with the feeding of the five thousand, the only miracle recorded by all four evangelists. After the people were fed, Jesus withdrew to the hillside to be alone. Night fell, and the disciples went down to the lake without him and, embarking in the only boat available, sailed for Capharnaum, which was on the western shore. Jesus caught up with them some time later by walking on the water. The multitude, thinking he still must be with them, stayed overnight where the miracle had been performed. The next morning they discovered Jesus was nowhere to be found and, when other boats put in near them, they embarked for Capharnaum, where they found Jesus and asked him when (but not how) he had made his way there, apparently thinking he had set off on foot before dawn for the long walk around the lake. He did not answer directly, but told them to “work to earn food which affords, continually, eternal life” (Jn 6:27). He had provided them their fill of natural bread; now he began to speak of supernatural bread.

With verse 30 begins a colloquy that took place in the synagogue at Capharnaum. The Jews asked him what sign he could perform, and, as a challenge, they noted that “our fathers had manna to eat in the desert” (Jn 6:31). Could Jesus top that? He told them the real bread from heaven comes from the Father. “Give us this bread”, they insisted. “But Jesus told them, It

is I who am the bread of life” (Jn 6:34-35). He was getting more explicit, and the Jews started to complain, but still understood him to be speaking metaphorically. Jesus repeated what he said before, then summarized: “I myself am the bread that has come down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever. And now, what is this bread that I am to give? It is my flesh, given for the life of the world” (Jn 6:51-52). Then the Jews asked, incredulously, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” (Jn 6:53).

Hugh Pope, in commenting on this chapter, remarked that at last “they had understood Him literally and were stupefied; but because they had understood Him correctly, He repeats His words with extraordinary emphasis, so much so that only now does He introduce the statement about drinking His blood”:¹ “You can have no life in yourselves, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood. The man who eats my flesh and drinks my blood enjoys eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. My flesh is real food, my blood is real drink. He who eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, lives continually in me, and I in him” (Jn 6:54-57).

There was no attempt to soften what was said, no attempt to correct “misunderstandings”, for there were none. His listeners understood him quite well. No one any longer thought he was speaking metaphorically, if they had, why no correction? On other occasions, whenever there was confusion, Christ explained what he meant. Here, where any misunderstanding would be catastrophic, there was no effort to correct. Instead, he repeated what he had said.

“There were many of his disciples who said, when they heard it, This is strange talk, who can be expected to listen to it?” (Jn 6:61). These were his *disciples*, people who already were used to his remarkable ways. He warned them not to think carnally, but spiritually: “Only the spirit gives life; the flesh is of no avail; and the words I have been speaking to you are spirit, and life” (Jn 6:64). But he knew some did not believe, including the one who was to betray him. (It is here, in the rejection of the Eucharist, that Judas fell away.) “After this, many of his disciples went back to their own ways, and walked no more in his company” (Jn 6:67).

This is the only record we have of any of Christ’s followers forsaking him for doctrinal reasons. If they merely had misunderstood him, if they foolishly had taken a metaphor in a literal sense, why did he not call them back and straighten things out? Both the Jews, who were suspicious of him, and his disciples, who had accepted everything up to this point, would have remained

had he told them he meant no more than a symbol.

But he did not correct these first protesters, these proto-Protestants. Twelve times he said he was the bread that came down from heaven; four times he said they would have “to eat my flesh and drink my blood”. John 6 was an extended promise of what would be instituted at the Last Supper—and it was a promise that could not be more explicit. Or so it would seem to a Catholic. But what do fundamentalists say?

Anti-Catholic writers identify two approaches to use when “disproving” the Real Presence. Jimmy Swaggart summarized them this way: “In all honesty we must repudiate this dogma on two counts: (1) It is opposed to Scripture. (2) It is contradicted by the evidence of the senses.”²

Fundamentalists concentrate on the first count, the argument from “the evidence of the senses” being weak since even a rudimentary understanding of transubstantiation makes one realize that the dogma, by definition, cannot be refuted through an appeal to sensory perception since there is not *supposed* to be any perceptible change to the eucharistic elements. Besides, an argument based on the senses must be an argument based on science or philosophy, and fundamentalists prefer to argue from the Bible.

In arguing from Scripture, every fundamentalist says Christ was speaking metaphorically in John 6 and during the Last Supper. Bart Brewer, head of Mission to Catholics International, says that “if I were to show someone a photograph of my son and say, ‘This is my son’, they [*sic*] would not take these words literally. The Scripture is written with such common language that it is obvious to any observant reader that the Lord’s Supper was intended primarily as a memorial and in no sense a literal sacrifice. In taking Biblical statements literally, we must be sure that doing so is consistent with the context and not in contradiction to other clear teaching.” Brewer also argues that “when Jesus said ‘this is my body’ or ‘blood’, he did not change the substance, but was explaining that he is the one ‘represented’ by the passover bread and wine. Jesus did not say *touto gignetai*, this has become or is turned into, but *touto esti*, which can only mean this represents or stands for.”³ Brewer’s Greek is deficient here. *Esti* is nothing else than the verb “is”. Its usual meaning is the literal, although it can be used figuratively, just as in English. If this crucial term is supposed to be read as “represents”, why was it not clearly put so in the Greek?

Brewer continues: “It is perfectly clear in the Gospels that Christ spoke in figurative terms, referring to Himself as ‘the door’, ‘the vine’, ‘the light’, ‘the

root', 'the rock', 'the bright and morning star', et cetera."⁴ In this Brewer is seconded by Donald F. Maconaghie of the Conversion Center: "It is clear that our Lord used a sign or figure which the Council of Trent would have us cursed for believing when He said, 'Except ye eat My flesh and drink My blood ye have no life in you' John 6:53. Was our Lord transubstantiated into a literal door? He said, 'I am the door' John 10:9. Or into a vine? He said, 'I am the true vine' John 15:1. Notice we also read: 'The ten horns are ten kings' Daniel 7:24. 'These great beasts which are four, are four kings' Daniel 7:17. 'The seven kine are seven years' Genesis 41:26."⁵

Leslie Rumble and Charles M. Carty answered this common charge years ago: "There is no logical parallel between the words 'This is My body' and 'I am the vine' or 'I am the door.' For the images of the vine and door can have, of their very nature, a symbolical sense. Christ is like a vine because all the sap of my spiritual life comes from Him. He is like a door since I go to heaven through Him. But a piece of bread is in no way like His flesh. Of its very nature it cannot symbolize the actual body of Christ. And he excludes that Himself by saying, 'The bread that I will give is My flesh for the life of the world, and My flesh is meat indeed.' That is, it is to be actually eaten, not merely commemorated in some symbolical way."⁶

Not surprisingly, Swaggart agrees with Maconaghie and Brewer. He writes, "*This is my body . . . this is my blood*, are accepted literally in Catholic dogma. On the same basis we should accept without thinking that Jesus gives us literal living waters which will produce eternal life (John 4:14), or that Jesus is truly a door (John 10:7-9), that He is a lamb (John 1:29), or that He is a growing vine (John 15:5). If the Catholic hierarchy is to be consistent, they [*sic*] should foster adoration of doors, vines, and lambs. Certainly, these figures of speech are descriptive and colorful, but they are transparently figurative, just as are the terms 'my body,' and 'my blood'. The New Testament Church and the Early Church understood and accepted this just as it was offered, *as a figure of speech*."⁷

Is that so? Let us see what the Early Church thought.

Writing to the Smyrnaeans around 110 and referring to "those who hold heterodox opinions", Ignatius of Antioch said, "They abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer, because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, flesh which suffered for our sins and which the Father, in his goodness, raised up again."⁸

Forty years later, Justin Martyr wrote, "We call this food Eucharist, and no

one else is permitted to partake of it, except one who believes our teaching to be true and who has been washed in the washing which is for the remission of sins and for regeneration and is thereby living as Christ has enjoined. For not as common bread nor common drink do we receive these; but since Jesus Christ our Savior was made incarnate by the word of God and had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so too, as we have been taught, the food which has been made into the Eucharist by the Eucharistic prayer set down by him, and by the change of which our blood and flesh is nourished, is both the flesh and the blood of that incarnated Jesus.”⁹

Irenaeus of Lyons, in his masterwork, *Against Heresies*, written toward the close of the second century, said that Christ “has declared the cup, a part of creation, to be his own Blood, from which he causes our blood to flow; and the bread, a part of creation, he has established as his own Body, from which he gives increase to our bodies”. He asks, “If the Lord were from other than the Father, how could he rightly take bread, which is of the same creation as our own, and confess it to be his Body and affirm that the mixture in the cup is his Blood?”¹⁰

Origen, writing about 244, demonstrated that reverence is given to the smallest particle from the host. “I wish to admonish you with examples from your religion. You are accustomed to take part in the divine mysteries, so you know how, when you have received the Body of the Lord, you reverently exercise every care lest a particle of it fall and lest anything of the consecrated gift perish. You account yourselves guilty, and rightly do you so believe, if any of it be lost through negligence.”¹¹

Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, said this in his *Sermon to the Newly Baptized*, delivered in 373: “You shall see the Levites bringing loaves and a cup of wine and placing them on a table. So long as the prayers of supplication and entreaties have not been made, there is only bread and wine. But after the great and wonderful prayers have been completed, then the bread is become the Body, and the wine the Blood, of our Lord Jesus Christ.”¹²

As a final example, taken from dozens that could have been used, Cyril of Jerusalem, in his *Catechetical Lectures*, presented in the middle of the fourth century, told his listeners: “Do not, therefore, regard the Bread and Wine as simply that; for they are, according to the Master’s declaration, the Body and Blood of Christ. Even though the senses suggest to you the other, let faith make you firm. Do not judge in this matter by taste, but be fully assured by

faith, not doubting that you have been deemed worthy of the Body and Blood of Christ.”¹³

Whatever else might be said, it is certain that the early Church took John 6 and the accounts of the Last Supper literally. There is no record in the early centuries of any Christian doubting the Catholic interpretation. There exists no document in which the literal interpretation is opposed and only the metaphorical accepted. Brewer persists by saying, “The doctrine of transubstantiation does not date back to the Last Supper as is supposed. . . . The idea of a corporal presence was vaguely held by some, such as Ambrose, but it was not until 831 A.D. that Paschasius Radbertus, a Benedictine monk, published a treatise openly advocating the doctrine of transubstantiation. Even then, for almost another four hundred years, theological war was waged over this teaching by bishops and people alike until at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 A.D., it was officially defined and canonized as a dogma.”¹⁴

This is misleading. First of all, the Real Presence was not “vaguely” held by Ambrose. In his treatise *The Sacraments*, composed about 390, he wrote, “You may perhaps say: ‘My bread is ordinary.’ But that bread is bread before the words of the sacraments; where the consecration has entered in, the bread becomes the flesh of Christ. And let us add this: How can what is bread be the Body of Christ? By the consecration. The consecration takes place by certain words, but whose words? Those of the Lord Jesus. . . Therefore it is the word of Christ that confects the sacrament.”¹⁵ Nothing vague about that.

And what about Paschasius Radbertus? Was he the first to believe in transubstantiation? Radbertus was abbot of Old Corbie Monastery near Amiens. In 831 he composed a treatise that contained this ambiguous expression: “This is precisely the same flesh that was born of Mary, suffered on the Cross, and rose from the tomb.”¹⁶ He narrated some eucharistic miracles that gave the impression that Christ must be understood to be sensibly present in the sacrament, and another monk at his abbey, Ratramus, wrote a countertreatise noting that one must distinguish between the appearance of Christ in the Eucharist and the appearance of his body received from Mary, but *he* used language that might suggest Christ is only symbolically present in the Eucharist. Both Radbertus and Ratramus were orthodox; the trouble was that neither was precise in wording.

“The debate between these principals soon became a theological free-for-all”, said historian Newman Eberhardt.¹⁷ Others entered the fray, sometimes proposing rectifying language that was even more confusing than what

Radbertus and Ratramus wrote. The dispute ended by 860, with no one denying the Real Presence. What should be noted is that, despite various attempts to phrase the doctrine of the Real Presence accurately, there was no cry from anyone that this was a new doctrine. It was taken as a given. Those who inadvertently implied the Presence might be symbolic only were considered the innovators, not those who presumed it was Real.

In the theological world there was no further controversy on the issue until Berengarius of Tours, who died in 1088. He had studied the dispute that began with Radbertus and Ratramus and concluded that Christ was indeed present only symbolically. He repeatedly signed recantations and then, safe at home, reiterated his original position. This theological seesaw went on for decades, until he finally subscribed to an unambiguous formula. Church historians say he apparently died reconciled.¹⁸ Whether or not he did, he is the first Christian, so far as we can tell from the records, who denied the Real Presence. Paschasius Radbertus and Berengarius of Tours are remembered to history only because the one seemed to doubt the Real Presence and the other actually did. What this tells us is that the accepted belief was the opposite of what they were understood to hold.

Back to the words of the text. Keith Green identified in his *Catholic Chronicles* two biblical passages as the keys to the Catholic position. The first is John 6:55-56: “The man who eats my flesh and drinks my blood enjoys eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. My flesh is real food, my blood is real drink.” Green said that “with just a little study of the whole passage (verses 27-71), it is clear that Jesus was not talking about physical, but spiritual food and drink.” He argued that since Jesus says “he who comes to me will never be hungry” (Jn 6:35), “*to come to Him* is to ‘eat’!” Similarly, since Jesus tells us in the same verse that “he who has faith in me will never know thirst”, it follows that “*to believe on Him* is to ‘drink’!”¹⁹

Bart Brewer concurs. “These verses actually disprove the dogma of transubstantiation. The ones who took Jesus’ words literally were offended. That is why He clarified their misunderstanding by teaching them that what he said was to be understood spiritually (see verse 63). . . . Looking back to verse 47, it is obvious that ‘eating’ is equivalent to ‘believing.’ It is certain that what is meant by eating this flesh and drinking this blood is neither more nor less than ‘believing’ in Christ,”²⁰ In short, the command to eat Christ’s flesh and drink his blood must be taken metaphorically.

But there is a problem with that. As John A. O'Brien put it, "the phrase 'to eat the flesh and drink the blood', when used figuratively among the Jews, as among the Arabs of today, meant to inflict upon a person some serious injury, especially by calumny or by false accusation. To interpret the phrase figuratively then would be to make our Lord promise life everlasting to the culprit for slandering and hating Him, which would reduce the whole passage to utter nonsense."²¹ Christ would be saying, "He that reviles me has eternal life."

The scriptural argument is capped, by all fundamentalist writers, with an appeal to John 6:64: "Only the spirit gives life; the flesh is of no avail; and the words I have been speaking to you are spirit, and life." This is a verse to which fundamentalists always return, and it was, by the way, the first verse that Jimmy Swaggart threw at Catholic writer Barbara Nauer when they discussed the interpretation of this chapter. She was stunned by his use of the line, for the very good reason that in the context of the narration it can be seen not to relate to the question they were examining, which was: Is the Real Presence real? Swaggart thought this verse more than compensated for the apparent (and literal) meaning of the earlier part of John 6, He interpreted Nauer's pause as a silent acknowledgement of defeat, when in fact she was trying to understand what this non sequitur had to do with the issue at hand.²² Did Swaggart think that Christ, who had just commanded his disciples to eat his flesh, now said their doing so would be pointless? Is that what "the flesh is of no avail" means? "Eat my flesh, but you'll find it's a waste of time"—is that how he was to be understood? And were the disciples to understand the line "the words I have been speaking to you are spirit, and life" as nothing but a circumlocution, and a fairly clumsy one at that, for "symbolic"? No one can come up with interpretations like these unless he first holds to the fundamentalist position and thinks it necessary to find some rationale, no matter how tortuous, for discarding the Catholic interpretation.

In John 6:64 the word "flesh" is not used in the same sense as in John 6:53-59. It is being used more in the Pauline sense, in which it is contrasted with "spirit". The contrast is between unaided nature and nature elevated by grace. Compare John 3:6: "What is born by natural birth is a thing of nature, what is born by spiritual birth is a thing of spirit." Christ detects in some of his listeners an unsupernatural attitude that looks for earthly rewards and that turns away from his teaching on the Eucharist. When he says "the flesh is of no avail", he does not mean "my flesh"—that would contradict his

immediately prior remarks. He means instead carnal understanding, as distinguished from spiritual.

Return to Keith Green. He examined John 6:55-56, the first of the passages he identified as key, and then turned to the second, Matthew 26:26, 28: “This is my body . . . this is my blood.” He noted that

Catholics base their whole religious system on their interpretation of these two verses. They adamantly teach that right here, Jesus is pronouncing the first priestly blessing that mysteriously changes the bread and wine into his body and blood. The absolute folly of such a conclusion is proved by this one observation: *He was literally still there* before, during, and after they had partaken of the bread and cup! He had not changed into some liquid and bread—His flesh was still on His bones, and His blood was still in His veins. He had not vanished away to reappear in the form of a piece of bread or a cup of wine!²³

So here we have the diabolically clever Catholic Church telling us the transformation was real, yet Jesus was still at the table. Catholic exegetes through the centuries missed the fact that he was still present, that he did not disappear in a puff of smoke and end up on the platter and in the cup. How stupid Catholics have been, to miss the obvious! (Perhaps this just shows that *none* of them ever read beyond John 6:28; if any Catholic had, he could have blown the whistle, and the Church would not have made such a fool of itself.) This is the loose thinking fundamentalists end up with if they conclude, as they do, that the answer to the Catholic position is elementary because the Catholic position is so clearly erroneous.

The reply to Green is simple: Christ was present at the Last Supper in two ways. He was present at the table in a natural way, as were the apostles, and he was present in the eucharistic elements in a sacramental way, which is precisely the way he is present in them today, in Catholic churches throughout the world. That Christ can be present in two ways simultaneously is indeed a mystery (a mystery being a religious truth that cannot be comprehended fully by reason), but it is not an impossibility. Something does not become impossible simply because we cannot understand it. After all, God is present everywhere—all Christians acknowledge that—and that is as much a mystery as Christ’s presence in the Eucharist. Are we to deny God’s omnipresence because we cannot conceive how he pulls it off? If Christ, who was on earth in a natural body and now reigns in heaven in a glorified body, can make the world out of nothing, certainly he can make bread and wine into his own Body and Blood. That should not be hard to accept, no matter how hard it might be to fathom. There is no good reason to limit God’s acts to the

extent of our understanding.

The fundamentalists' problem is that theirs is a religion almost entirely lacking in the mysterious. More precisely, they readily acknowledge only those mysteries that are purely spiritual, such as the Trinity. They know the doctrine of the Trinity has been revealed, that something about the Trinity can be known, that certain deductions can be drawn from what is known; and they realize the essence of the Trinity lies beyond human comprehension, and they are happy to leave it at that. When it comes to mysteries that involve the mixing of spirit and matter, a kind of Docetism shows.

For fundamentalists the sacraments are out because they necessitate a spiritual reality, grace, being conveyed by means of matter. This seems a violation of the divine plan. Matter is not to be used, but overcome or avoided, and in this lies the unease with which they view the Incarnation. One suspects that, had they been asked by the Creator their opinion of how to effect mankind's salvation, they would have advised him to adopt an approach that would have appealed to Mary Baker Eddy. How much cleaner things would be if spirit never dirtied itself with matter! But God, quite literally, loves matter, and he loves it so much that he comes to us under the appearance of bread and wine. There is no contradiction in Christ being both physically and sacramentally present.

The verses fundamentalists have the hardest time with are 1 Corinthians 11:26-30: "So it is the Lord's death that you are heralding, whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, until he comes. And therefore, if anyone eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily, he will be held to account for the Lord's body and blood. [Douay-Rheims translation: ". . . shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord".] A man must examine himself first, and then eat of that bread and drink of that cup; he is eating and drinking damnation to himself if he eats and drinks unworthily, not recognizing the Lord's body for what it is." And what should it be recognized as? A mere metaphor? Then how can receiving unworthily be equated with being "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord"?

"Plain and simple reason", observed Nicholas Cardinal Wiseman more than a century ago in his *Lectures on the Real Presence*, "seems to tell us that the presence of Christ's body is necessary for an offense committed against it. A man cannot be 'guilty of majesty' unless the majesty exists in the object against which his crime is committed. In like manner, an offender against the Blessed Eucharist cannot be described as guilty of Christ's Body and Blood,

if these be not present in the Sacrament.”²⁴

“How could a person be guilty, if he had merely eaten a little bread and drunk a little wine, as a picture or representation or reminder of the Last Supper?” asked Rumble and Carty more recently. “No one is guilty of homicide if he merely does violence to the picture or statue of a man without touching the man in person. St. Paul’s words are meaningless without the dogma of the Real Presence.”²⁵ They may indeed then be meaningless, but fundamentalists would rather live with a meaningless Real Absence than a meaning-full Real Presence.

Chapter 20

The Mass

There is no mistaking it. Fundamentalists do not like the Mass, and they like it even less than they otherwise might because they misunderstand what it is. Jimmy Swaggart says, “The Roman Catholic church teaches that the Holy Mass is an expiatory (sin removing) sacrifice, in which the Son of God is actually sacrificed anew on the cross.”¹ Loraine Boettner calls the Mass a “jumble of medieval superstition”.² Keith Green called the Mass blasphemous because there can be no continuing offering for sin, Christ having died “once for all”.³ One comfortably may assume these men never read an official Catholic explanation of the Mass—or, if they did, that they did not understand it. Each could have turned for help to Vatican II, which put the Catholic position succinctly:

At the Last Supper, on the night He was betrayed, our Savior instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of His Body and Blood. He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the centuries until He should come again, and so to entrust to His beloved spouse, the Church, a memorial of His death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us.⁴

One does not need to read the documents of Vatican II to know Catholics say the Mass was instituted at the Last Supper. Any modestly informed Catholic can set an inquirer right on this and direct him to the biblical accounts of the final night Jesus was with his disciples. Anyone turning to the text would find these words: “Then he took bread, and blessed and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, This is my body, given for you; do this for a commemoration of me” (Lk 22:19). The Greek here and in the parallel Gospel passages (Mt 26:26; Mk 14:22) reads: *Touto estin to soma mou*. It is given slightly differently by Paul: *Touto mou estin to soma* (1 Cor 11:24). They all translate as “This is my body.” The verb *estin* is the equivalent of the English “is” and can mean “is really” or “is figuratively”. The usual meaning of *estin* is the former, just as, in English, the verb is usually taken in the real or literal sense.

Fundamentalists, of course, insist Christ, in saying, “This is my body”, spoke only a trope. This interpretation is precluded by Paul’s discussion of the Eucharist in 1 Corinthians 23-24 and by the whole tenor of John 6, the chapter where the Eucharist is promised. The Greek word for “body” in John 6 is *sarx*, which can only mean physical flesh, and the word for “eat” translates as “gnaws” or “chews”. This is not the language of metaphor.

The literal meaning cannot be avoided except through violence to the text—and through the rejection of the universal understanding of the early Christian centuries. The writings of Paul and John reflect belief in a Presence that is Real. There is no basis for forcing anything else out of the lines, and no writer tried to do so until the early Middle Ages. In short, Christ did not institute a Figurative Presence.

Sometimes fundamentalists say the use of the word “is” can be explained by the fact that Aramaic, the language spoken by Christ, had no word for “represents”. Jesus just had to do the best he could with a restricted vocabulary. Those who make this claim are behind the times, even for fundamentalists, most of whom now acknowledge that such an argument is feeble since, as Cardinal Wiseman showed a century ago, Aramaic has about three dozen words that can mean “represents”,⁵ so Christ would have had no difficulty at all in giving an unmistakable equivalent of “this represents my body.”

There have been attempts to get around the plain sense of the passage by wishing the words away. James Moffatt produced his second translation of the New Testament in 1913; it gives Matthew 26:26 and parallel passages this way: “Take and eat this, it means my body.” With this Moffatt ceased to be a translator and became an interpreter. Present-day fundamentalists do not rely on his version of the New Testament, generally preferring the Authorized Version instead, but Moffatt’s lapse from scholarly proprieties (what Arnold Lunn called “a glaring example of the subordination of scholarship to sectarian prejudice”)⁶ is indicative of the problems the accounts of the Last Supper cause people who refuse to take the words at face value.

As if the Catholic claim about the reality of the Real Presence were not bad enough, the Church insists that the Mass is the continuation and re-presentation of the sacrifice of Calvary. It is *not* a re-Crucifixion of Christ. He does not suffer and die again. On the other hand, it is more than just a memorial service.

John A. O’Brien says:

The manner in which the sacrifices are offered is alone different: on the Cross Christ really shed His blood and was really slain; in the Mass, however, there is no real shedding of blood, no real death; but the separate consecration of the bread and of the wine symbolizes the separation of the body and blood of Christ and thus symbolizes His death upon the Cross. The Mass is the renewal and perpetuation of the sacrifice of the Cross in the sense that it offers anew to God the Victim of Calvary and thus commemorates the sacrifice of the Cross, reenacts it symbolically and mystically, and applies the fruits of Christ's death upon the Cross to individual human souls. All the efficacy of the Mass is derived, therefore, from the sacrifice of Calvary.⁷

Keith Green would not have bought such an explanation. The second of Green's *Catholic Chronicles* is called *The Sacrifice of the Mass*. The subtitle is *Jesus Dies Again*, which aptly summarizes Green's position. Though Green now presumably knows better, having had a chance to obtain the proper interpretation of the Bible from the Author himself, people who rely on his writings apparently do not, so let us take a look at what he thought while here below.

His tract asks:

Have you ever wondered why in every Catholic church they still have Jesus up on the cross? Every crucifix with Jesus portrayed as nailed to it tells the whole Catholic story—Jesus is still dying for the sins of the world! But that's a lie! We need only look to the Scriptures to see the truth. The Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of the 'once for all' sacrifice of Christ on the cross, not a daily sacrifice on altars. The Bible repeatedly affirms in the clearest and most positive terms that Christ's sacrifice on Calvary was complete in that one offering. And that it was never to be repeated is set forth explicitly in Hebrews, chapters 7, 9, and 10.

Green then quotes Hebrews 7:27; 9:12; 9:25-28; and 10:10-14. (The Catholic reader should review these passages; Hebrews 9:28, for instance, reads: "Christ was offered once for all, to drain the cup of the world's sins.") Green notes that "throughout these verses occurs the statement 'once for all' which shows how perfect, complete, and final Jesus' sacrifice was! . . . Any pretense of a continuous offering for sin is worse than vain, it is blasphemy and true fulfillment of the Scripture, 'Seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame' " (Heb 6:6). Green does not mention the context in which Hebrews 6:6 is placed. It has nothing directly to do with the Mass. Instead, the first verses of the chapter deal with those who fall away from the Faith after baptism. Forgiveness of their sins cannot come through a second baptism, since there is only one baptism established by Christ. What do they want? the sacred writer asks. Do they want a new baptism to be given through a second Crucifixion? That is the only way it could happen. "Would they crucify the Son of God a second time, hold him

up to mockery a second time, for their own ends?”

This verse simply does not say what Green thought it did. Nor do the others. The Catholic Church specifically says Christ does not die again—his death is indeed once for all—but that does not contradict the doctrine of the Mass. It would be something else if the Church were to claim he *does* die again, but it does not make that claim. A re-presenting of the original sacrifice does not necessitate a new Crucifixion.

Keith Green has not been the only fundamentalist writer, of course, to disapprove of the Mass. “It must not be supposed for a minute”, warns Loraine Boettner in *Roman Catholicism*, “that modern Roman Catholics do not literally believe this jumble of medieval superstition. They have been taught it from infancy, and they do believe it. It is the very sternest doctrine of their church. It is one of the chief doctrines, if indeed it is not the chief doctrine, upon which their church rests.”⁸ Boettner’s argument is summarized in one paragraph. It is worth quoting at length. He says:

This doctrine of the mass, of course, is based on the assumption that the words of Christ, “This is my body” and “This is my blood” (Matt. 26:26-28), must be taken literally. The accounts of the institution of the Lord’s Supper, both in the Gospels and in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, make it perfectly clear that He spoke in figurative terms. Jesus said, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood” (Luke 22:20). And Paul quotes Jesus as saying: “This is the new covenant in my blood. . . . For as oft as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord’s death till he come” (1 Cor 11:25-26). In these words He used a double figure of speech. The cup is put for the wine, and the wine is called the new covenant. The cup was not literally the new covenant, although it is declared to be so as definitely as the bread is declared to be His body. They did not literally drink the cup, nor did they literally drink the new covenant. How ridiculous to say that they did! Nor was the bread literally His body, or the wine His blood. After giving the wine to the disciples Jesus said: “I shall not drink from henceforth of the fruit of the vine, until the Kingdom of God shall come” (Luke 22:18). So the wine, even as He gave it to them, and after he had given it to them, remained “the fruit of the vine”!⁹

Boettner continues by giving a cleverly incomplete quotation. He writes, “Paul too says that the bread remains bread: ‘Wherefore whosoever shall eat the bread and drink the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner. . . . But let each man prove himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup’ ” (1 Cor 11:27-28).¹⁰ The part of verse 27 represented by the ellipsis is crucial. It reads: “shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord”. Why does Boettner omit this? Because to be guilty of someone’s body and blood is to revile him, and one can hardly revile baked flour or fermented grape juice. This omitted line makes no sense at all unless it means a profanation of the

sacrament is something serious, and it clearly implies the bread and wine become Christ himself.

Boettner is not through. He has to mimic the early pagan opponents to Christianity by saying that “another and more important proof that the bread and wine are not changed into the literal and actual flesh and blood of Christ is this: the literal interpretation makes the sacrament a form of *cannibalism*. For that is precisely what cannibalism is—the eating of human flesh. Rome attempts to deny this, but without much logic.”¹¹ Peter Stravinskias turns this charge on its head and uses it to make an important observation. Allegations of cannibalism actually backfire on fundamentalists because, in bringing the topic up today, they encourage Catholics to note that it was brought up centuries ago. Stravinskias notes that “both Tertullian and Minucius Felix. . . give considerable attention in their second-century writings to the charge of cannibalism being leveled against the Church. A belief in the Real Presence thus clearly existed in the Early Church, for no ‘simple memorial supper’ would have evoked such specific and violent charges from the general pagan population.”¹²

Leslie Rumble and Charles M. Carty also addressed the cannibalism claim.

When Christ promised that He would give His very flesh to eat, the Jews protested because they imagined a natural and cannibalistic eating of Christ’s body. Christ refuted this notion of the manner in which His flesh was to be received by saying that He would ascend into heaven, not leaving His body in its human form upon earth. But He did not say that they were not to eat His actual body. He would thus contradict Himself, for a little earlier He had said, “My flesh is meat indeed and My blood is drink indeed” John 6:56. He meant, therefore, “You will not be asked to eat My flesh in the horrible and natural way you think, for My body as you see it with your eyes will be gone from this earth. Yet I shall leave my flesh and blood in another and supernatural way which your natural and carnal minds cannot understand. The carnal or fleshly judgment profits nothing. I ask you, therefore, to have faith in Me. It is the spirit of faith which will enable you to believe, not your natural judgment.”¹³

Another fundamentalist dissatisfied with the Mass is Ralph Woodrow. He presents his view in *Babylon Mystery Religion* by giving in full a poem he acknowledges to be crude. The author is listed as anonymous, and with good reason. The poem is called “A Roman Miracle”, and in forty lines it tells the story of a Protestant woman who married a Catholic. One day her husband brought his priest to dinner in order to effect her conversion. After the priest gave his counsel, they all agreed to meet again, and he promised to confect the sacrament in her presence if she would prepare the bread. He returned, did as he said, and prepared to eat. At the last moment she warned him that

“half an ounce of arsenic was mixed right in the batter, / But since you have its nature changed, it cannot really matter.” The priest, of course, ran away, eating nothing, and the contrite husband turned to his wife, saying: “To gulp such mummery and tripe, I’m not for sure, quite able; / I’ll go with you and we’ll renounce this Roman Catholic fable.”¹⁴

The literary worth of the poem is as modest as Woodrow’s understanding of transubstantiation. On Catholic principles, the priest was quite right, of course, to refuse to eat, for the simple reason that only the bread, not the poison, could be transubstantiated. Anything mixed with the bread would have remained unaltered (assuming the mixture would not have been unconfectable matter in the first place), and the bread would have retained the appearance and properties of bread. The arsenic would have remained poison. Transubstantiation would not have made the arsenic disappear, but this is something Woodrow seems not to realize. He just wants to poke fun at Catholics who “play” with bread and wine, but a review of Genesis might give him pause.

The Old Testament predicted that Christ would offer a true sacrifice to God in bread and wine—that he would use those elements. Melchisedech, the king of Salem and a priest, offered sacrifice under the form of bread and wine (Gen 14:18). Psalm no predicted Christ would be a priest “according to the order of Melchisedech”, that is, offering a sacrifice in bread and wine. We must, then, look for some sacrifice other than Calvary, since it was not under the form of bread and wine. The Mass fits the bill.

Joseph Zacchello, revealer of *Secrets of Romanism*, demurs: “Melchisedech brought bread and wine to refresh Abraham and his followers, not to sacrifice. The Roman version is a mistranslation. It translates ‘And he was a priest’, as follows: ‘For he was a priest’, in order to make it appear that he brought forth bread and wine in his official capacity as a priest to offer sacrifice with them.”¹⁵ Zacchello grasps for straws. The conjunction “and” in Greek often has the force of “for”, so here “and he was a priest” means the same as “for he was a priest”. What is more, “according to the order of Melchisedech” means “in the manner of Melchisedech” (“order” not referring, of course, to the modern notion of a religious order, there being no such thing in Old Testament days). The only “manner” shown by Melchisedech was the use of bread and wine. A priest sacrifices the items offered—that is the main task of all priests, in all cultures, at all times—so the bread and wine must have been what Melchisedech sacrificed. He did not

bring these elements along just because he thought it might be time for Abraham's lunch.

Fundamentalists sometimes admit Christ followed the example of Melchisedech at the Last Supper, but claim it was a rite that was not to be continued. They undermine their opposition to the Mass in saying this, since such an admission shows, at least, that the Last Supper was truly sacrificial. The key, though, is that they overlook that Christ said, "Do this for a commemoration of me" (Lk 22:19). Clearly, he was not talking about a one-time thing.

It is this command that makes fundamentalists uncomfortable. They think its Catholic interpretation minimizes the salvific work of Christ. Not so. "If all people were saved in that one momentous occasion," asks Stravinskis, "why does the Church continue to offer the sacrifice of the Mass? Because the salvation promised and earned is conditional; because it is contingent upon our acceptance of Jesus, our desire to be saved, and our living of a lifestyle which demonstrates an understanding of what life in Christ means. Since we were not present, we need to be reminded of what God has done for us. Our remembrance and ritual re-enactment of the event make it happen again—for us."¹⁶

One should keep in mind that, after foretelling the rejection of the Jewish priesthood, the prophet Malachi predicted a new sacrifice would be offered in every place. "From the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles; and in every place there is a sacrifice and there is offered to my name a clean oblation" (Malachi 1:10-11). Note that he speaks of one sacrifice, not many sacrifices, but one that is offered everywhere. The sacrifice of Calvary took place in one place only. We must look for a sacrifice apart from Calvary, one that is given under the form of bread and wine. Only the Mass meets the requirements.

As might be expected, fundamentalists put little stock in claims about the antiquity of the sacrificial aspects of the Mass, even if they think the Mass, in the form of a mere commemorative meal, commenced with the Last Supper. Many say the Mass as a sacrifice was not taught until the Middle Ages, alleging Innocent III was the first Pope to teach the doctrine. He merely insisted on a doctrine that had been held from the first but was being publicly doubted in his time. He formalized, but did not invent, the notion that the Mass is a sacrifice. Jimmy Swaggart, for one, goes further back than do most fundamentalists, claiming, "By the third century the idea of sacrifice had

begun to intrude.”¹⁷ Still other fundamentalists say Cyprian of Carthage was the first to mention a sacrifice.¹⁸ Irenaeus, writing *Against Heresies* in the second century, was ahead of Cyprian when he wrote of the sacrificial nature of the Mass,¹⁹ and Clement of Rome in his turn was ahead of Irenaeus when he wrote about those “from the episcopate who blamelessly and holily have offered its Sacrifices”.²⁰ It simply is not possible to get closer to New Testament times than this because Clement was writing *during* New Testament times. After all, at least one apostle, John, was still alive.

Fundamentalists are particularly upset about the Catholic notion that the sacrifice on Calvary is somehow continued through the centuries by the Mass. To them it seems Catholics are trying to have it both ways. The Church on the one hand says that Calvary is “perpetuated”, which seems to mean the same act of killing, the same letting of blood, is repeated again and again. This violates the “once for all” idea, fundamentalists claim. On the other hand, what Catholics call a sacrifice seems in fact to have no relation to biblical sacrifices since it does not look the same; after all, no splotches of blood are to be found on Catholic altars. “We must, of course, take strong exception to such pretended sacrifice”, Boettner instructs.

We cannot regard it as anything other than a deception, a mockery, and an abomination before God. The so-called sacrifice of the mass certainly is not identical with that on Calvary, regardless of what the priests may say. There is in the mass no real Christ, no suffering, and no bleeding. And a bloodless sacrifice is ineffectual. The writer of the book of Hebrews says that “apart from shedding of blood there is no remission” of sin (9:22); and John says, “The blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). Since admittedly there is no blood in the mass, it simply cannot be a sacrifice for sin.²¹

Boettner misreads chapter 9 of Hebrews, which begins with an examination of the Old Covenant. Moses is described as taking the blood of calves and goats and using it in the purification of the tabernacle (Heb 9:19-21; see Ex 24:6-8 for the origins of this). “And if such purification was needed for what was but a representation of the heavenly world, the heavenly world itself will need sacrifices more availing still. The sanctuary into which Jesus has entered is not one made by human hands, is not some adumbration of the truth; he has entered heaven itself, where he now appears in God’s sight on our behalf. Nor does he make a repeated offering of himself, as the high priest, when he enters the sanctuary, makes a yearly offering of the blood that is not his own” (Heb 9:23-25). So it was under the Old Law that a repeated blood sacrifice

was necessary for the remission of sins. Under the Christian dispensation, blood (Christ's) is shed only once, but it is continually offered to the Father.

How can that be? ask fundamentalists. They have to keep in mind that "what Jesus Christ was yesterday, and is today, he remains for ever" (Heb 13:8). What Jesus did in the past is present to God now, and God can make the sacrifice of Calvary present to us at Mass. "So it is the Lord's death you are heralding, whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, until he comes" (1 Cor 11:26).

In the final analysis, what makes the Mass literally unbelievable for fundamentalists is that they cannot conceive of a single act that is perpetuated through time. For them, what happened on Calvary happened there alone and remains in the dead past. They see Catholic priests conducting a sacrifice today and conclude that today's sacrifice must be distinct from Calvary's. If it really is a sacrifice, it is an attempt to replay Calvary in the most literal way—which, they know, is quite impossible. Christ cannot be killed again. So, for fundamentalists, what priests do at the altar really reduces to a show. Priests may think they are re-presenting the same sacrifice, but fundamentalists know they are only playacting.

It is fundamentalists' sense of the mysterious, their sense of the supernatural, that is undeveloped. Ask them about the nature of the afterlife. One will receive no enlightening answer, maybe no answer at all. It is as if they have hardly thought about the subject. Just what is the spiritual life like, anyway? It hardly does any good to say people will be happy in heaven. Some people are happy in the Bronx, but heaven must be something other than a superlative version of a New York borough. Having been instructed poorly in the supernatural as such, fundamentalists have not given it much thought, and they have trouble imagining that God is actually beyond time. They usually think of eternity as being nothing but endless years, a time line that disappears into the mists at each end, and they do not think of Calvary being in a perpetual Now.

They could imagine, say, several Jewish priests, all at about the same time, offering what could be termed a single sacrifice in the Temple. First one comes in, then another, and a few minutes later a third. They can see how three separate acts of offering could be considered a single sacrifice, if the three acts are nearly simultaneous. But thousands, millions of Masses through the centuries, each Mass like the others, but each quite different in appearance from Calvary itself? How can we say they are all the

representation of that original Sacrifice? If they cannot imagine the continuity being not so much in time, which is marked by days and hours, but outside of time, which is a single Now, they cannot help but think Catholics are trying to pull a fast one. It requires a determined refocusing of the mind to see things from the Catholic perspective, and this is not easy for fundamentalists to accomplish. It is far easier for Catholics to put themselves in fundamentalist shoes than for fundamentalists to step into ours. It is something like the problem that even Catholics have in getting a right appreciation of the Eucharist.

“You see, we are so materialistic”, noted Ronald Knox in *The Window in the Wall*,

our minds are so chained to the things of sense, that we imagine our Lord as instituting the Blessed Sacrament with bread and wine as the remote matter of it because bread and wine reminded him of that grace which he intended the Blessed Sacrament to bestow. But, if you come to think of it, it was just the other way about. When he created the worlds, he gave common bread and wine for our use in order that we might understand what the Blessed Sacrament was when it came to be instituted. He did not design the Sacred Host to be something like bread. He designed bread to be something like the Sacred Host.^{[22](#)}

One who has trouble grasping this insight will understand how difficult it is for fundamentalists to get a true appreciation of the Catholic doctrine of the Mass. They are so accustomed to reading the relevant biblical verses in a particular way that they cannot see there is far more than initially meets their eyes.

Chapter 21

Honoring the Saints

A diocesan priest, a man who always seemed to have the right words for the occasion, was celebrating a nuptial Mass. The bride had been raised a Catholic, but the groom had not. He was a recent convert. His entire family and almost all his friends at the wedding were non-Catholics. Since many of the bride's friends were not Catholics either, few people at the Mass understood what was going on. The priest therefore interspersed his liturgical duties with explanations.

It is traditional, at the conclusion of the ceremony, for the bride to take a bouquet to a side altar and lay it at the feet of a statue of the Virgin, at the same time praying that she might emulate Mary as a wife and mother. When the time came for that gesture, the priest commented that the placing of the flowers is done because “we Catholics worship Mary”. There was a collective sigh from the few Catholics in the church and a collective gasp from the non-Catholics, who apparently had their worst suspicions confirmed.

Was the priest right or wrong? Well, probably both. He was right in his understanding of the word “worship”, although he was using it in what is almost an archaic sense. He was surely wrong in using it in front of people who would misunderstand his meaning. After all, in common speech worship means adoration given to God alone. In this sense Catholics do not worship Mary or any of the other saints. But in an older usage the term worship means not just adoration of God but the honor given to anyone deserving honor.

Begin with the word itself. It comes from the Old English *weorthscipe*, which means the condition of being worthy of honor, respect, or dignity. To worship in the older, larger sense is to ascribe honor, worth, or excellence to someone, whether a sage, a magistrate, or God. But there are different kinds of worship as there are different kinds of honor. The highest honor, and thus the highest worship, is given to God alone, while the honor or worship given to living men or to saints in heaven is of a different sort. Idolatry thus does not simply mean giving worship (in the old sense) to living men or to saints;

it means giving them the kind reserved for God.

Nowadays there is a problem with using the word because in the popular mind it refers to God alone. For practical purposes it has come to mean nothing else than adoration. Although it was commonly used in the wider sense as recently as the nineteenth century (when, for instance, Orestes Brownson, perhaps the foremost Catholic intellectual America has produced, wrote *The Worship of Mary*), it is perhaps too confusing to use it that way now, as the example of the priest shows. It is no doubt wise to restrict its use to God and to use for saints and others terms such as honor and veneration.

Is this a distinction without a difference? It would be if the honor given to God were the same as the honor given to a saint. But it is not.

Consider how honor is given. We regularly give it to public officials. In the United States it is customary to address a judge as “Your Honor”. (It has been the British custom to address certain magistrates—here it comes—as “Your Worship”, but that is another can of worms.) In the marriage ceremony it used to be said that the wife would “love, honor, and obey” her husband. On Mount Sinai there was a command given to “honor thy father and thy mother” (Ex 20:12). Letters to legislators are addressed to “The Hon. So-and-So”. And just about anyone, living or dead, who bears an exalted rank is said to be worthy of honor, and that is particularly true of historical figures, as when children are, or at least used to be, instructed to honor the Founding Fathers.

So, if there can be nothing wrong with honoring the living, who still have an opportunity to ruin their lives through sin, or the uncanonized dead, about whose state of spiritual health we can only guess, certainly there can be no argument against giving honor to saints whose lives are done and who ended them in sanctity. If merit deserves to be honored wherever it is found, it surely should be honored among God’s special friends.

When we speak of honoring saints and particularly Mary, the greatest of the saints, what do we mean? How is this honor demonstrated? One way is through art. Our regard for the saints is shown through the employment of statues or paintings, just as we honor a deceased relative by keeping his photograph on the mantelpiece. It is said by fundamentalists, of course, that Catholics worship statues. Not only is this untrue, it is even untrue that Catholics honor statues. After all, a statue is nothing but a carved block of marble or a chunk of plaster, and no one gives honor to marble yet unquarried or plaster still in the mixing bowl.

The fact that someone kneels before a statue to pray does not mean that he is praying to the statue, just as the fact that one kneels with a Bible in his hands—as fundamentalists at times do—does not mean that he is worshipping the Bible. Statues or paintings or other artistic devices are used to recall to the mind the person or thing depicted. Just as it is easier to remember one's mother by looking at her photograph, so it is easier to recall the lives of the saints, and thus be edified by their examples, by looking at representations of them.

More important than honor shown to saints through artistic expression is the honor shown through personal communication, through prayer. Catholics honor saints, and particularly Mary, by praying to them and asking them to intercede with God on their behalf. This immediately brings up the question: Can saints in heaven hear us? After all, with extraordinarily rare exceptions, any communication with them seems to be at best a one-way street. True, there have been apparitions of Mary and some saints to a few individuals, but the Church has repeatedly said that no one is obliged to believe that these take place or to place any credence in what is said during them. Private revelations are binding only on the individuals to whom they are made; belief in them is not necessary for salvation. So, if we discount such instances, it seems that prayers go to the saints but that no unmistakable answers are received from them. So how do we know they hear us?

For the Catholic the answer can be almost deceptively simple: We know, because the Church tells us so. However satisfying such an answer may be to those who believe in the Magisterium and think there is a good reason to accept its teachings, it is hardly convincing to fundamentalists, who are unable to find any comfort in hagiographical accounts—or even in historical accounts of such things as Fatima.¹

The fundamentalists' chief problem in accepting that saints can hear prayers is that their notions of heaven and the afterlife are attenuated. For many of them the afterlife is hardly a life at all. They, like many Christians, draw a blank when they try to explain what heaven is like. Some can imagine nothing other than the stereotypic harps and choirs. Others say heaven is an impenetrable haze and that all we can know is that we will be happy there.

One thing that certainly can be said is that those in heaven are alive to God. "Have you never read in the book of Moses how God spoke to him at the burning bush, and said, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?' Yet it is of living men, not dead men, that he is the God"

(Mk 12:26-27). The saints in heaven are more alive now than we are. In the arms of God, they are more solicitous of us than when they were on earth. Just as Paul asked the other disciples to pray for him (Rom 15:30; Col 4:3; 1 Th 1:11), so now we can ask Paul and the other saints in heaven to intercede for us with God. We are not cut off from fellow Christians at death, but are, strangely enough and contrary to our unreflecting thoughts, brought closer. We continue in one communion, the communion of saints.

To fundamentalists the term communion of saints and its allied term, the Mystical Body of Christ, mean nothing. They have never heard of them, except for those who once were Catholics, and probably none of *them* ever understood the phrases. It is enough to remind fundamentalists of the image of the vine and its branches (Jn 15:1-8). They accept this as a metaphor of our relation to Christ, he being the vine, we the branches that live through him. They can see that if we are connected to Christ, we are connected to one another, but they tend to forget that those in heaven are not suddenly cut off from the vine. The saints remain as branches, which, if the symbolism means anything, means they remain related to us.

Paul develops Christ's teaching about the Mystical Body, about the vine and branches. He sees Christ as the head, the members of the Church as the body. The acts of any one member are profitable to all the members. "There was to be no want of unity in the body; all the different parts of it were to make each other's welfare their common care. If one part is suffering, all the rest suffer with it; if one part is treated with honor, all the rest find pleasure in it. And you are Christ's body, organs of it depending on each other" (1 Cor 12:25-27). He goes on, saying, "Each of us has one body, with many different parts, and not all these parts have the same function; just so we, though many in number, form one body in Christ, and each acts as the counterpart of another" (Rom 12:4-5).

A natural, even a necessary, inference from this teaching is intercessory prayer, which Paul requests for himself and all the saints: "Only, brethren, I entreat you by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Holy Spirit, to give me the help of your prayers to God on my behalf" (Rom 15:30); "offer your supplication for all the saints" (Eph 6:18). Here, of course, Paul is writing about the members of the Church Militant, but his teaching on the Mystical Body implies that prayers unite us with the Church Triumphant, too.

While the Bible does not explicitly refer to the veneration and invocation of saints, there is scriptural warrant for the practice. First there is the

reverence offered angels (Jos 5:14; Dan 8:17; Tob 12:16). This reverence is predicated on the angels' supernatural dignity, which comes from their union with God (Mt 18:10). Since the saints are also united with God (1 Cor 13:12; 1 John 3:2), it follows that they are also worthy of reverence.

The ancient Jews believed in the intercession of saints. Judas Maccabaeus saw in a vision "most worthy of credence" how two deceased men, the high priest Onias and the prophet Jeremiah, interceded with God for the Jews (2 Mace 15:11-16). And Jeremiah himself wrote that Moses and Samuel made intercession for the Jews, apparently meaning after their deaths (Jer 15:1). We learn that angels and saints place the prayers of the holy on earth at God's feet (Tob 12:12; Rev 5:8, 8:3), which is to say that they support the prayers with their intercessions. These verses also mean, apparently, that the angels and saints are the ones prayed to and that they then take these prayers to God.

John Henry Newman said that, in Revelation,

the sacred writer goes so far as to speak of "grace and peace" being sent to us, not only from the Almighty, but "from the seven Spirits that are before His throne", thus associating the Eternal with the ministers of His mercies; and this carries us on to the remarkable passage of St. Justin, one of the earliest Fathers, who, in his Apology, says, "To Him (God), and His Son who came from Him, and taught us these things, and the host of other good Angels who follow and resemble Him, and the Prophetic Spirit, we pay reverence and homage."

Newman then said that "one instance is given us, which testifies to the continuation of so high an office beyond this life. Lazarus, in the parable, is seen in Abraham's bosom. It is usual to pass over this striking passage with the remark that it is a Jewish expression; whereas, Jewish belief or not, it is recognised and sanctioned by our Lord Himself."² If Dives could pray to Lazarus (that must have been how he spoke to him) across the unbridgeable abyss, then why should we not be able to pray to saints across an abyss they have successfully crossed and we hope to cross?

But why ask the saints to pray to God on one's behalf? Why not pray to God directly? After all, ask fundamentalists, isn't Christ the one mediator (1 Tim 2:5), and do not the saints become mediators in violation of that if they pray for us? Orestes Brownson answered the first of these questions in a series of articles he wrote for *Ave Maria* magazine in 1865 and 1866. "But still it is asked", Brownson noted,

what need to pray the saints at all, and why not pray directly to God himself, since he is infinitely nearer to us, and more ready and able to help us than any saint is or can be? In reply, I answer that Catholics do pray directly to God, and perhaps even more than, they do who reject prayers to

the saints; and I might ask, in our turn, why pray even directly to God, since he knows all our wants better than we ourselves know them, knows what we are going to pray for before the prayer is formed in our own heart, and is infinitely more willing to help us than we are to ask his help? The same principle that justifies prayer to God justifies prayers to the saints to intercede for us.³

Brownson also answered the charge that saints cannot hear our prayers.

But it is alleged, even by persons who call themselves Christians, that however well disposed the saints might be to intercede for us, they cannot hear our invocations, and therefore our prayers to them are vain and even superstitious. If they cannot hear us, our prayers to them *are* unquestionably superstitious, and not to be tolerated. But wherefore can they not hear us? Are they not living men and women—even more living than when they tabernacled with us? . . . There can be no communion where there is no medium of communication. We who live have a medium of communication with those who have gone to their reward and therefore form one communion with them. This medium is Christ himself, who is the head of every man, and whose life is the life of all who are begotten anew by the Holy Ghost. . . . There is no more mystery in the way the saints hear our invocations than there is in the way we hear one another. Mystery there is, but it is the same mystery in both cases, and it would be absurd to maintain that we do not hear one another because we cannot explain how we do it. There being a medium of communication between us and the saints, and they and we forming only one communion, one body of our Lord, being members of him and members of one another, nothing can be more reasonable, more natural even, than that we should invoke their prayers, and that they should intercede for us. It is in accordance alike with the order of nature and the order of grace.⁴

In response to fundamentalists' other question, about Christ being the one mediator, consider what we do for one another now. We pray for others, and we ask others to pray for us. By doing so we indeed act as mediators since we pray to God on behalf of others, and our friends are mediators for us. (Attend a fundamentalist service and see how Brother This and Sister That ask the congregation to "pray over them"; fundamentalists' theories are often contradicted by their acts.) This prayer for one another does not violate Christ's role as the one mediator, because ours is a secondary mediatorship that is entirely dependent on his. Paul asked his friends to pray for him as he prayed for them, and today Christians do the same, but none of this violates the truth that without Christ our prayers to the Father would be ineffectual.

A common objection to prayer to the saints is stated by Loraine Boettner:

How, then, can a human being such as Mary hear the prayers of millions of Roman Catholics, in many different countries, praying in many different languages, all at the same time? Let any priest or layman try to converse with only three people at the same time and see how impossible that is for a human being. . . . The objections against prayers to Mary apply equally against prayers to the saints. For they too are only creatures, infinitely less than God, able to be at only one place at a time and to do only one thing at a time. How, then, can they listen to and answer

thousands upon thousands of petitions made simultaneously in many different lands and in many different languages? Many such petitions are expressed, not orally, but only mentally, silently. How can Mary and the saints, without being like God, be present everywhere and know the secrets of all hearts?⁵

Ex-priest Joseph Zacchello quotes at length from John Hunkley's *How I Became a Non-Catholic*. Hunkley took pencil and paper, estimated how many times a day Rosaries are recited around the world, timed how long it takes to say a Hail Mary, and determined that Mary would "have to listen to 46,296 petitions at one and the same time, simultaneously, every second of time from one end of the year to the other". But no one except God can listen to so many petitions at once, he claimed, which means either Mary cannot hear them, or Catholics think she is divine,⁶

If being in heaven were like being in the next room, then such objections would be valid. Someone in the next room would indeed suffer the restrictions posed by space and time. But the saints are not in the next room, and heaven has no space or time. In heaven everything happens in one great Present; there is neither past nor future in our sense of the terms. When God looks at his creation, he sees all of it at once, all that has been, all that now is, all that will be. It is by his sufferance we communicate with one another on earth, and he likewise lets us communicate with the saints in heaven—who, like God, are outside of space and time. To say that they do not have time to listen to many prayers at once is to commit a basic error—they do not have time at all, because they are beyond time. This does not imply that they therefore must be omniscient as is God, for it is only through God's willing it that they can communicate with others in heaven or with us.

Chapter 22

Marian Beliefs

The Marian doctrines are, for fundamentalists, among the most annoying of the doctrines people identify as peculiarly Catholic. Fundamentalists disapprove of any talk about Mary as the Mother of God, as the Mediatrix, as the Mother of the Church; they disbelieve in her Immaculate Conception, do not think she was assumed into heaven, and hold that she was not a lifelong virgin. For many fundamentalists, Catholicism is little more than a subordination of basic Christianity (C. S. Lewis' "mere Christianity") to a confusing skein of Marian beliefs; they see these beliefs as interfering with, even canceling, the proper attitude toward Christ. Let us examine the Marian doctrines fundamentalist writers most frequently complain about.

Immaculate Conception

Catholic exegetes, in discussing the Immaculate Conception, begin with the Annunciation. Gabriel greeted Mary by saying "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee" (Lk 1:28). This is the traditional rendering, based on the Vulgate. The phrase "full of grace" is a translation, by way of the Latin, of the Greek *kecharitomene*, but it is not a transliteration. In Greek, "full of grace" would be *pleres charitos*, which is used for Christ in John 1:14 and for Stephen in Acts 6:8, not *kecharitomene*.

Newer translations, based directly on the Greek, render Luke 1:28 as "Rejoice, you who enjoy God's favor! The Lord is with you" (New Jerusalem Bible) or "Rejoice, O highly favored daughter! The Lord is with you" (New American Bible). These translations are imperfect, since they give the impression that the favor bestowed on Mary was no different from that given other women in the Bible.¹ If she had been merely "highly favored", in the normal connotation of those words (and it is the normal connotation that many people will read here), her status would have been indistinguishable from that of Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist; or Sarah, the wife of Abraham; or Anna, the mother of Samuel—all of whom, by the way, were

long childless and were “highly favored” because God acceded to their pleas to bear children.

“*Charts* means favor, disinterested benevolence, coming from God”, explains Rene Laurentin. “Does this mean that *kecharitomene* means only the extrinsic favor of God? From two points of view it means much more.” Both theologically and philologically, he says, the word indicates “a transformation of the subject”. The sense is not just “to look upon with favor, but to transform by this favor or grace”.² *Kecharitomene*, then, signifies a plenitude of favor or grace.

The newer translations leave out something the Greek conveys, something the older translation conveys, which is that this grace (and the core of the word *kecharitomene* is *charts*, after all) is at once permanent and of a singular kind. The Greek indicates a perfection of grace. A perfection must be perfect not only intensively, but extensively. The grace Mary enjoyed must not only have been as “full” or strong or complete as possible at any given, time, but it must have extended over the whole of her life, from conception. That is, she must have been in a state of sanctifying grace from the first moment of her existence to have been called “full of grace” or to have been filled with divine favor in a singular way. This is just what the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception holds: that Mary, “in the first instant of her conception was, by a singular grace and privilege of Almighty God in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, preserved exempt from all stain of original sin”.³

(One should keep in mind what the Immaculate Conception is *not*. Some non-Catholics think the term refers to Christ’s conception in Mary’s womb without the intervention of a human father; the proper name for that is the Virgin Birth. Others think the Immaculate Conception means Mary herself was conceived “by the power of the Holy Spirit”, in the way Jesus was, but it does not. The Immaculate Conception means that Mary, whose conception was brought about the normal way, was conceived in the womb of her mother without the stain of original sin. The essence of original sin consists in the lack of sanctifying grace. Mary was preserved from this defect; from the first instant of her existence she was in the state of sanctifying grace.)

Fundamentalists’ chief reason for objecting to the Immaculate Conception and Mary’s consequent sinlessness—which is what her lifelong state of sanctifying grace implies—is that Mary was but a creature, and we are told that “all have sinned” (Rom 3:23). Besides, they say, Mary said her “spirit

rejoices in God my Savior” (Lk 1:47), and only a sinner needs a Savior. Since Mary was a sinner, she could not have been immaculately conceived.

Take the second citation first. The Church has a simple and sensible answer to this difficulty. It is this: Mary, too, required a Savior. Like all other descendants of Adam, by her nature she was subject to the necessity of contracting original sin. But by a special intervention of God, undertaken at the instant she was conceived, she was preserved from the stain of original sin and certain of its consequences. She was therefore redeemed by the grace of Christ, but in a special way, by anticipation. The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception thus does not contradict Luke 1:47.

What about Romans 3:23, “all have sinned”? Fundamentalists, as a rule, think it means more than that everyone is subject to original sin. They think it means everyone commits actual sins. They conclude it means Mary must have sinned during her life, and that certainly would speak against an Immaculate Conception. Is the fundamentalists’ analysis solid? Not really. Think about a child below the age of reason. By definition he cannot sin, since sinning requires the ability to reason and the ability to intend to sin. If the child dies before ever committing an actual sin, because he is not mature enough to know what he is doing, what act of his brings him under their interpretation of Romans 3:23? None, of course.

Paul’s comment to the Christians in Rome thus would seem to have one of two meanings. Despite the phrasing, it might be that it refers not to absolutely everyone, but just to the mass of mankind (which means young children and other special cases, such as Mary, would be excluded without having to be singled out). If not that, then it would mean that everyone, without exception, is subject to original sin, which is true for a young child, for the unborn, even for Mary—but she, although due to be subject to it, was preserved from its stain.

It took a positive act of God to keep her from coming under its effects the way we have. We had the stain of original sin removed through baptism, which brings sanctifying grace to the soul, thus making the soul spiritually alive and capable of enjoying heaven, and makes the recipient a member of the Church. We might say that Mary received a very special kind of “baptism” at her conception, but, because since she never contracted original sin, she enjoyed certain privileges we never can, such as entire avoidance of sin.

On occasion one will hear that the Immaculate Conception cannot be

squared with Mary's own description of herself: "He has looked graciously on the lowliness of his handmaid" (Lk 1:48). How could she be lowly if she were, as Catholics say, the highest creature, what the poet Wordsworth called "our tainted nature's solitary boast"?⁴ If she understood herself to be lowly, does that not mean she understood herself to have sinned?

The key is that sin is not the only motive for lowliness. Compared to God, any creature, no matter how perfect, is lowly, Mary included. Jesus, referring to his human nature, said, "Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart" (Mt 11:29). Certainly he was without sin, and if he could describe himself as lowly, there can be no argument against Mary describing herself the same way.

The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was officially defined by Pope Pius IX in 1854. When fundamentalists claim that the doctrine was "invented" at this time, they misunderstand both the history of dogmas and what prompts the Church to issue, from time to time, definitive pronouncements regarding faith or morals. They are under the impression that no dogma is believed until the Pope or an ecumenical council issues a formal statement about it.

Actually, dogmas are defined formally only when there is a controversy that needs to be cleared up or when the Magisterium thinks the faithful can be helped by particular emphasis being drawn to some already-existing belief. The definition of the Immaculate Conception was prompted by the latter motive; it did not come about because there were widespread doubts about the doctrine. Pius IX, who was highly devoted to the Virgin, hoped the definition would inspire others in their devotion to her.

The Assumption

As they reject the Immaculate Conception and Mary's perpetual virginity, so fundamentalists reject the dogma of the Assumption, but they do not worry about it much. What little thought they give to it concerns why Catholics think Mary did not die. That is not the Catholic position, of course, but fundamentalists think it is, and they are concerned about a privilege that finds no warrant in Scripture.

They note that Enoch "walked with God, and he was seen no more because God took him" (Gen 5:24). He was translated so as not to see death (Heb 11:5). Then there was Elijah, who was taken up into heaven in a fiery chariot

(2 Kings 2:1-13). The Bible says nothing about what happened to Mary, they note, and does it not seem there would be some mention of her never dying? After all, it would have been truly “remark-able”.

There is a certain sense in their argument, and if the doctrine of the Assumption were what they think it is, the argument would carry some weight. But it is beside the point because Catholic commentators, not to mention the Popes, have agreed that Mary died; that belief has long been expressed through the liturgy. (The Church has never formally defined whether she died or not, and the integrity of the doctrine of the Assumption would not be impaired if she did not die, but the almost universal consensus is that she did in fact die.) The Assumption is therefore simpler than fundamentalists fear, although still not acceptable to them. In 1950 Pope Pius XII, in an exercise of papal infallibility, defined that Mary, “after the completion of her earthly life”—note the silence regarding her death—“was assumed body and soul into the glory of Heaven”.⁵ In short, her body was not allowed to corrupt; it was not allowed to remain in a tomb.

(It is also necessary to keep in mind what the Assumption is *not*. Some people think Catholics believe Mary “ascended” into heaven. That is not correct. Christ, by his own power, ascended into heaven. Mary was assumed or taken up into heaven by God. She did not do it under her own power.)

True, no express scriptural proofs for the doctrine are available. The possibility of a bodily assumption before the Second Coming is not excluded by 1 Corinthians 15:23, and it is even suggested by Matthew 27:52-53: “and the graves were opened, and many bodies arose out of them, bodies of holy men gone to their rest: who, after his rising again, left their graves and went into the holy city, where they were seen by many”.

There is also what might be called the negative historical proof. As every fundamentalist knows, from the first Catholics gave homage to saints, including many about whom we now know nothing. Cities vied for the title of the last resting place of the most famous saints. Rome, for example, claims the tombs of Peter and Paul, Peter’s tomb being under the high altar of the Basilica that bears his name. Other cities claim the mortal remains of other saints, both famous and obscure. We know the bones of some saints were distributed to several cities, so more than one, for example, are able to claim the “head” of this or that saint, even if the “head” is only a small portion of the skull. With a few exceptions (such as Peter, who was only claimed by Rome, never, for example, by Antioch, where he worked before moving on to

Rome), the more famous or important the saint, the more cities wanted his relics.

We know that after the Crucifixion Mary was cared for by the apostle John (Jn 19:26-27). Early Christian writings say John went to live at Ephesus and that Mary accompanied him. There is some dispute about where she ended life; perhaps there, perhaps back at Jerusalem. Neither those cities nor any other claimed her remains, although there are claims about possessing her (temporary) tomb. Why did no city claim the bones of Mary? Apparently because there were no bones to claim and people knew it.

Remember, in the early Christian centuries relics of saints were jealously guarded, highly prized. The bones of those martyred in the Colosseum, for instance, were quickly gathered up and preserved; there are many accounts of this in the biographies of those who gave their lives for the Faith. Yet here was Mary, certainly the most privileged of all the saints, certainly the most saintly, but we have no record of her bodily remains being venerated anywhere.

Most arguments in favor of the Assumption, as developed over the centuries by the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, concern not so much scriptural references (there are few that speak even indirectly to the matter), but rather the fittingness of the privilege. The speculative grounds considered include Mary's freedom from sin, her Motherhood of God, her perpetual virginity, and—the key—her participation in the salvific work of Christ. It seems most fitting that she should attain the full fruit of the Redemption, which is the glorification of the soul and body.

Yet there is more than just fittingness. Pius XII said the Assumption is really a consequence of the Immaculate Conception. "These two singular privileges bestowed upon the Mother of God stand out in most splendid light at the beginning and the end of her earthly journey. For the greatest possible glorification of her virgin body is the complement, at once appropriate and marvelous, of the absolute innocence of her soul, which was free from all stain. . . [S]he shared in Christ's glorious triumph over sin and its sad consequences."⁶

"But", ask fundamentalists, "if Mary was immaculately conceived, and if death was a consequence of original sin, why did she die?" Although she was wholly innocent and never committed a sin, she died in order to be in union with Jesus. Keep in mind that he did not have to die to effect our redemption; he could have just willed it, and that would have been sufficient. But he

chose to die. Mary identified herself with his work, her whole life being a cooperation with God's plan of salvation, certainly from her saying, "Let it be done to me according to thy word" (Lk 1:38), but really from the very start of her life. She accepted death as Jesus accepted death, and she suffered (Lk 2:35) in union with his suffering. Just as she shared in his work, she shared in his glorification. She shared in his Resurrection by having her glorified body taken into heaven, the way the glorified bodies of all the saved will be taken into heaven on the Last Day.

Still, fundamentalists ask, where is the proof from Scripture? Strictly, there is none. It was the Catholic Church that was commissioned by Christ to teach all nations and to teach them infallibly. The mere fact that the Church teaches the doctrine of the Assumption as something definitely true is a guarantee that it *is* true. Here, of course, we get into an entirely separate matter, the question of *sola scriptura*, which is considered elsewhere. It is enough to say there is no problem with an infallible Church officially defining a doctrine that, although not in contradiction to Scripture, cannot be found on its face. After all, the Bible says nothing against the Assumption; silence is not the same as rejection, although, to be sure, silence is not the same as affirmation either. Silence is just—silence.

The Mother of God

Frank Sheed said that Louisa Cozens, "who earned her daily-bread scrubbing floors", "had as gifted a theological mind as I have met",⁷ although she had only a primary school education. In 1928 she spent many evenings, after work, at the apartment where Sheed and his wife, Maisie Ward, lived because it was the only quiet place she could write. There, without reference books, she composed *A Handbook of Heresies*, probably the best small-compass account of departures from the Faith. It covers everything from Ebionism to modernism.

Cozens had a knack for getting right to the pith. In her discussion of Nestorianism, named after the bishop of Constantinople who, around 429, declared that Mary was the Mother of Christ, but not the Mother of God, thereby denying the hypostatic union, Cozens noted that "Protestants, if asked to declare their belief in the Incarnation, nearly always define it in terms which prove their underlying Nestorianism. Even when they are willing to say that Jesus Christ is God, they shrink from the Catholic statement, that

God was born of Mary; that God shed his blood for us on Calvary; that God died. Today as in the fifth century, in London as at Ephesus, the honour of Mary is the safeguard, the outpost of the adoration of her son. To acknowledge the *Theotokos* ["God-bearer"] is to believe in God the Son made man."⁸

Little wonder, then, that fundamentalists, who are in so many ways archetypal Protestants, cringe when they hear Catholics refer to the Virgin as the Mother of God. How can God have a Mother, they ask, since that would imply she is older than God? The question is laughable for Catholics, but fundamentalists take it seriously. It is not the real reason, of course, that they disapprove of the idea of *Theotokos*. They do not say to themselves that they would call Mary the Mother of God if only this question of chronology could be answered to their satisfaction.

Their real objection is that the phrase "Mother of God" elevates Mary too much. Sure, they say, she was Christ's mother, Jesus' mother, and no doubt a good woman, but otherwise undistinguished. They perceive God as being so "wholly other" that there is a real, if unperceived, difficulty in their accepting the Incarnation in its fullest sense. It is easy for them to fall into Nestorius' position; he held that the union of the two natures in Christ was little more than a moral union of two distinct persons, the divine Son and the human Jesus. So very often, when fundamentalists discuss the matter privately and at length, they end up saying the same thing, all because of their effort to escape honoring Mary.

The answer to difficulties regarding Mary's status as the Mother of God can be explained only by noting the distinction between personhood and nature. Fundamentalists say Mary was the mother of Christ's human nature, not the mother of his divine nature, but with a little effort they can be brought to see that this is wrong. After all, was your mother the mother of your human nature? No, she was the mother of *you*. It is a *person* who is conceived and born, not a *nature*. What person was born of Mary? A divine Person only, not a human person—but a divine Person who took on a human nature. The one born of Mary "shall be called the son of God" (Lk 1:35), and "God sent his son, made of a woman" (Gal 4:4).

To say that Christ was a human person is to deny the hypostatic union. Most fundamentalists do not know that term—they are confused, too, about the distinction between person and nature—but they can perceive the contradiction inherent in their position if someone shows it to them. They can

see that if Mary was not the Mother of God, then she was the mother only of Christ as a human person. They can see that *if that* was the case, then Christ was two distinct persons, a human person and a divine Person. But this is something fundamentalists do not believe; they acknowledge one Person in two natures, even if they have trouble stating the belief as such.

So there is a logical, but not psychological, contradiction here. If thought through, they would see that their position on the *Theotokos* leads to an impossible conclusion, but they have not thought it through because fundamentalism's spirit is antitheological, antispeculative. It holds theorizing on religious matters to be an invitation to heterodoxy, a view that stems from its insistence that Christian truth is ultimately experienced, not known, that will is higher than intellect. This makes for endless difficulties when Catholics and fundamentalists sit down to talk, since the latter are suspicious of syllogisms. The difficulties can be overcome with patience and an awareness that there are often unmentioned presuppositions that have to be handled first if a discussion is to get anywhere.

Mary as Mediatrix

Fundamentalists think Catholics put Mary on a par with her Son. After all, what is the word mediatrix but the feminine of mediator? Do not Catholics go even further, calling Mary the Mediatrix of all graces? Does this not deny Christ's role as the one Mediator?

The contradiction here is illusory. As Thomas Aquinas said in reference to 2 Corinthians 5:19, "Christ alone is the perfect mediator of God and men, inasmuch as, by his death, he reconciled the human race to God. . . . However, nothing hinders certain others from being called mediators, in some respect, between God and man, forasmuch as they cooperate in uniting men to God, dispositively or ministerially."⁹ After all, we mediate for others when we pray to God on their behalf, which, of course, is something fundamentalists themselves do. This does not argue against Christ being the sole Mediator, because our modest efforts are entirely dependent on him. In a far more perfect way, Mary shares in his mediation. Her status as Mediatrix of all graces exists in a double sense.

First, she gave the world its Redeemer, the source of all graces, and in this sense she is the channel of all graces. She freely cooperated with God's plan (Lk 1:38: "Be it done to me according to thy word"), and, as St. Thomas

wrote, at the Annunciation, at the key moment for our race, she represented the whole of humanity.¹⁰ The Fathers of the Church contrast Mary's obedience, which was perfectly free, with Eve's disobedience.

Second, Mary is the Mediatrix of all graces because of her intercession for us in heaven. What this means is that no grace accrues to us without her intercession. We are not to suppose that we are obliged to ask for all graces through her or that her intercession is intrinsically necessary for the application of graces. Instead, through God's will, grace is not conferred on anyone without Mary's cooperation.

True, scriptural proofs for this are lacking. Theologians refer to a mystical interpretation of John 19:26 ("Woman behold thy son, son behold thy mother"), an interpretation that sees John as the representative of the human race, Mary thus becoming the spiritual mother. They note the doctrine is reasonable because it is fitting.

This is little consolation to fundamentalists, of course, who see little fitting about it and who put little stock in speculative theology and even less in mystical theology. As a practical matter, this kind of doctrine is one of the last accepted by someone approaching the Church, particularly someone coming to the Church from fundamentalism, and it is accepted, ultimately, on the authority of the Church rather than on the authority of clear scriptural references. Fundamentalists, always looking for a biblical citation, can see no reason to accept a belief in Mary as Mediatrix of all graces, but they can, if they take the effort, come to see that there is, at least, nothing in the doctrine that contradicts Christ's role as the one Mediator. His role as Mediator is not lessened because she has been allowed to assist him.

The Veneration of Mary

To fundamentalists, the veneration of Mary is nothing other than the worship of Mary, as shown by their use of the term Mariolatry. They really believe Catholics put Mary on the same level as God. Some of their complaints seem ridiculous to Catholics. The most common, perhaps, is that in the Rosary ten prayers are said to Mary for every one said to the Father.¹¹ The implication is usually left unspoken, but one is supposed to conclude, apparently, that Catholics prefer Mary ten to one over God. Looked at this way, the Rosary becomes a medieval Gallup poll.

Bill Jackson writes about Mary in his *Christian's Guide to Roman*

Catholicism. He explains that “the rise in devotion to her came when a backslidden church, having lost the reality of Christ, was presented with the pagan concept of a female deity and she was deemed able to mediate between them and a God Who was too far away”.¹² One of the problems with this argument is timing. Paganism effectively disappeared by the end of the sixth century, but devotion to Mary of a sort seen today was not common until the Middle Ages, by which time paganism was not even a distant memory.

Granted, there is a certain logic in claiming Catholicism adopted pagan ways when paganism was still vibrant. In fact, this is exactly what fundamentalists claim when they say Catholicism, as distinguished from Christianity, arose at the beginning of the fourth century, when Christianity was legalized in the Roman Empire. Most Romans were still pagans, they note, so it made sense for the Catholic authorities to curry favor with adherents of the majority religion. They do not realize their argument undercuts any claim that the Church appealed to paganism in promoting the veneration of the Virgin. There were no pagans left in the former Roman territory as the Middle Ages opened, so what could be gained by taking on a devotion designed to appeal to them?

One of the favorite tactics of fundamentalists, in disparaging the honors given to Mary, is to quote from some Marian devotional works. Chief among them is Alphonsus Liguori’s *The Glories of Mary*, which is still popular and still in print. Liguori’s book is a source of one-liners that, taken out of context (and his context is often a page or more, or even a whole chapter), seem to put Mary not just on a par with her Son, but above him. It is not easy dealing with a writer, even a saint, whose style is full of literary conceits and hyperbolic statements. *The Glories of Mary* is precisely the kind of book one should not press into the hands of a non-Catholic who has no appreciation of the Church’s position on Mary—not because it is wrong and not because it reveals “secrets” reserved for the initiated, but because it is not easy to understand.

It is a matter of sequence, a matter of the groundwork that needs to be done first. There is no question that Liguori is orthodox, of course, and that his writings are enlightening, but they are simply too much for a fundamentalist to absorb. In reading Liguori, all the fundamentalist’s fears seem confirmed, and that is only to be expected, since he has no appreciation of what the Catholic position on Mary really is and—what is just as bad—no appreciation of the style of religious writing that was popular in the eighteenth century,

when Liguori wrote. It is remarkably easy for a fundamentalist to be frightened away from the Church. He needs to be shown Catholicism slowly, much the way the Faith was revealed only in increments to the catechumens of the early centuries. The fundamentalist feels real revulsion at doctrines he understands poorly, such as the Marian doctrines, but he can be brought to understand and even to adhere to them if the proper foundation is laid.

Mary's Perpetual Virginity

“When Catholics call Mary the Virgin, they mean she remained a virgin throughout her life. When Protestants use the term, they mean she was a virgin only until the birth of Jesus; they believe that she and Joseph later had children, all those called “the brethren of the Lord”. What gives rise to the disagreement are biblical verses that use the terms “brethren”, “brother”, or “sister”.

These are representative verses; “While he was still speaking to the multitude, it chanced that his mother and his brethren were standing without, desiring speech with him” (Mt 12:46); “Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joseph and Judas and Simon? Do not his sisters live here near us?” (Mk 6:3); “For even his brethren were without faith in him” (Jn 7:5); “All these, with one mind, gave themselves up to prayer, together with Mary the mother of Jesus, and the rest of the women and his brethren” (Acts 1:14); “Have we not the right to travel about with a woman who is a sister, as the other apostles do, as the Lord’s brethren do, and Cephas?” (1 Cor 9:5).

The first thing to note, when trying to understand such verses, is that the term “brother” has a wide meaning in the Bible. It is not restricted to brothers german or half brothers. The same goes for “sister” and the plural “brethren”. Lot is described as Abraham’s “brother” (Gen 14:14), but Lot was the son of Aran, Abraham’s deceased brother (Gen 11:26-28); this means Lot was really Abraham’s nephew. Jacob is called the “brother” of his uncle Laban (Gen 29:15). Cis and Eleazar were the sons of Moholi; Cis had sons of his own, but Eleazar had no sons, only daughters, who married their “brethren”, the sons of Cis. These “brethren” were really their cousins (1 Chron 23:21-22),

The terms “brethren”, “brother”, and “sister” did not refer only to close relatives, as in the above examples. Sometimes they meant only a kinsman (Dt 23:7; 2 Esd 5:7; Jer 34:9), as in the reference to the forty-two “brethren”

of king Ochozias (2 Kings 10:13-14). The words could mean even people apparently unrelated, such as a friend (2 Sam 1:26; 1 Kings 9:13, 20:32), or just an ally (Amos 1:9).

Why this ambiguous usage? Because neither Hebrew nor Aramaic, the language spoken by Christ and his disciples, had a special word meaning “cousin”. Speakers of those languages used either the word for “brother” or a circumlocution, such as “the son of the sister of my father”. Using a circumlocution was a clumsy way to speak, so they naturally fell to using the word “brother”.

The writers of the New Testament were brought up to use the Aramaic equivalent of “brethren” to mean both cousins and sons of the same father—plus other relatives and even nonrelatives. When they wrote in Greek, they did the same thing the translators of the Septuagint did. In the Septuagint the Hebrew word that includes both true brothers and cousins was translated as *adelphos*, which in Greek has the (usually) narrow meaning that the English “brother” has. Unlike Hebrew or Aramaic, Greek has a separate word for cousin, *anepsios*, but the translators of the Septuagint favored *adelphos*, even for true cousins.

One might say they transliterated instead of translated. They took an exact equivalent of the Hebrew word for “brother” and did not use *adelphos* here (for sons of the same parents), *anepsios* there (for cousins). This same usage was employed by the writers of the New Testament and passed into English translations of the Bible. To determine just what “brethren” or “brother” or “sister” means in any one verse, we must look at the context. When we do that, we see insuperable problems arise if we assume that Mary had children other than Jesus.

At the Annunciation, when the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, she asked, “How can that be, since I have no knowledge of man?” (Lk 1:34). From the earliest interpretations of the Bible we see that this was taken to mean that she had made a vow of lifelong virginity, even in marriage. If she had taken no such vow, the question would make no sense at all.

There is no reason to assume Mary was wholly ignorant of the rudiments of biology. She presumably knew the normal way in which children are conceived. If she anticipated having children and did not intend to maintain a vow of virginity, she would hardly have to ask “how” she was to have a child, since having a child the normal way would be expected by a newlywed. No, her question makes sense only if there was an apparent, but

not a real, conflict between keeping a vow of virginity and acceding to the angel's request. A careful look at the New Testament shows Mary kept her vow and never had any children other than Jesus.

In the story of his being found in the Temple, Jesus, at age twelve, is mentioned as evidently the only Son of Mary (Lk 2:41-51); there is no hint of other children in the family. The people of Nazareth, where he grew up, refer to him as "the son of Mary" (Mk 6:3), not as "a son of Mary". The Greek expression implies he is her only son. In fact, others in the Gospels are never referred to as Mary's sons, not even when they are called Jesus' "brethren". If they were in fact her sons, this would be strange usage.

There is another point, perhaps a little harder for moderns, or at least Westerners, to grasp. It is that the attitude taken by the "brethren of the Lord" implies they are his elders. In ancient and, particularly, in Eastern societies (remember, the Holy Land is in Asia), older sons gave advice to younger, but younger never gave advice to older—it was considered disrespectful to do so. But we find Jesus' "brethren" saying to him that Galilee was no place for him and that he should go to Judaea so his disciples could see his doings, so he could make a name for himself (Jn 7:3-4). Another time, they sought to restrain him for his own benefit, saying, "He must be mad" (Mk 3:21). This kind of behavior could make sense for ancient Jews only if the "brethren" were older than Jesus, but that alone eliminates them as his brothers german, since Jesus, we know, was Mary's "first-born".

Consider what happened at the foot of the Cross. When he was dying, Jesus entrusted his Mother to the apostle John: "Jesus, seeing his mother there, and the disciple, too, whom he loved, standing by, said to his mother, Woman, this is thy son. Then he said to the disciple, this is thy mother. And from that hour the disciple took her into his own keeping" (Jn 19:26-27). The Gospels mention four "brethren", James, Joseph, Simon, and Jude, It is hard to imagine why Jesus would have disregarded family ties and made this provision for his Mother if these four were also her sons.

Fundamentalists are insistent nevertheless that "brethren of the Lord" must be interpreted in the strict sense. They most commonly make two arguments based on this verse: "And he knew her not till she brought forth her first-born son" (Mt 1:25). They first argue that the natural inference from "till" is that Joseph and Mary afterward lived together as husband and wife, in the usual sense, and had several children. Otherwise, they ask, bringing up their second point, why would Jesus be called "first-born"? Does that not mean there must

have been at least a “second-born”, perhaps a “third-born” and “fourth-born”, and so on?

The problem for them is that they are trying to use the modern meaning of “till” (or “until”) instead of the meaning it had when the Bible was written. In the Bible, it means only that some action did not happen up to a certain point; it does not imply that the action did happen later, which is the modern sense of the term. In fact, if the modern sense is forced on the Bible, some ridiculous meanings result.

Consider this fine: “Michal the daughter of Saul had no children until the day of her death” (2 Sam 6:23). Are we to assume she had children after her death? How about the raven that Noah released from the ark? The bird “went forth and did not return till the waters were dried up upon the earth” (Gen 8:7). In fact, we know the raven never returned at all. Then there was the burial of Moses. About the location of his grave it was said that no man knows “until this present day” (Dt 34:6)—but we know that no one has known since that day either. Or how about this: “And they went up to mount Sion with joy and gladness, and offered holocausts, because not one of them was slain till they had returned in peace” (1 Mace 5:54). Does this mean the soldiers were slain after they returned from battle?

The examples could be multiplied, but there should be no need. It should be clear that nothing at all can be proved from the use of the word “till” in Matthew 1:25. Recent translations give a better sense of the verse: “He had no relations with her at any time before she bore a son” (New American Bible); “he had not known her when she bore a son” (Knox translation).

The other argument used by fundamentalists concerns the term “first-born”. They say Jesus could not be called Mary’s “firstborn” unless there were other children that followed him. This is a misunderstanding of the way the ancient Jews used the term. For them it meant the child that opened the womb (Ex 13:2; Nb 3:12). Under the Mosaic law, it was the “first-born” son that was to be sanctified (Ex 34:20). Did this mean the parents had to wait until a second son was born before they could call their first the “first-born”? Hardly. The first male child of a marriage was termed the “first-born” even if he turned out to be the only child of the marriage. This usage is illustrated by a funerary inscription discovered in Egypt. The inscription refers to a woman who died during the birth of her “first-born”.

Fundamentalists also say it would have been repugnant for Mary and Joseph to enter a marriage and yet remain virgins. They call married virginity

an “unnatural” arrangement. Certainly it is unusual, but not as unusual as having the Son of God in one’s family, not as unusual as having a true virgin give birth to a child. The Holy Family was neither an average family nor even one suited to be chosen as “family of the year” from among a large number of similarly situated families. We should not expect its members to act as we would. The Holy Family is the ideal family, but not because it is like “regular” families in all major respects, only better. In major respects it is totally unlike any other family. The circumstances demanded that, just as they demanded the utmost in sacrifice on the part of Mary and Joseph. This was a special family, set aside for the nurture of the Son of God. No greater dignity could be given to marriage than that.

Backing up the testimony of Scripture regarding Mary’s perpetual virginity is the testimony of early Christian writings. Consider the controversy between Jerome and Helvidius. It was Helvidius, writing around 380, who first brought up the notion that the “brethren of the Lord” were children born to Mary and Joseph after Jesus’ birth. Jerome first declined to comment on Helvidius’ remarks because they were a “novel, wicked, and a daring affront to the faith of the whole world”.¹³ This was an entirely new interpretation, one nobody had ventured before, and it was beneath contempt.

At length, however, Jerome’s friends convinced him to write a reply, which turned out to be his treatise called *On the Perpetual Virginity of the Blessed Mary*. He used not only the scriptural arguments given above, but cited earlier Christian writers, such as Ignatius, Polycarp, Irenaeus, and Justin Martyr. Helvidius claimed the support of two writers, Tertullian and Victorinus, but Jerome showed this was no support at all, since Tertullian was a heretic (a Montanist) and the passage from Victorinus had been misinterpreted. Helvidius was unable to come up with a reply, and his theory was not employed again until modern times.

So, if it is established that the “brethren of the Lord” were not Jesus’ brothers german or half brothers, who were they? That they were Jesus’ cousins has been the accepted view at least from the time of Jerome until recent centuries. (Before Jerome the consensus was that they definitely were not Mary’s sons, but not necessarily that they were her nephews.)

Of the four “brethren” who are named in the Gospels, consider, for the sake of argument, only James. Similar reasoning can be used for the other three. We know that James’ mother was named Mary. Look at the descriptions of the women standing beneath the Cross: “Among them were

Mary Magdalen, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee” (Mt 27:56); “Among them were Mary Magdalen, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joseph, and Salome” (Mk 15:40). Then look at what John says: “And meanwhile his (Jesus’) mother, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalen had taken their stand beside the cross of Jesus” (Jn 19:25). If we compare these parallel accounts of the scene of the Crucifixion, we see that the mother of James and Joseph must be the wife of Cleophas. So far so good.

An argument against this, though, is that James is elsewhere (Mt 10:3) described as the son of Alphaeus, which would mean this Mary, whoever she was, was the wife of both Cleophas and Alphaeus. One solution is that she was widowed once, then remarried. More probably Alphaeus and Cleophas (Clopas in Greek) are the same person, since the Aramaic name for Alphaeus could be rendered in Greek in different ways, either as Alphaeus or Clopas. Another possibility is that Alphaeus took a Greek name similar to his Jewish name, the way that Saul took the name Paul.

So it is probable, anyway, that James is the son of this other Mary and Cleophas. If the testimony of Hegesippus, a second-century historian, is believed, Cleophas was the brother of Joseph, the foster father of Jesus.¹⁴ James would thus be Joseph’s nephew and a cousin of Jesus, who was Joseph’s putative son. This identification of the “brethren of the Lord” as Jesus’ cousins is open to legitimate question—they might even be relatives more distantly removed—and our inability to know certainly their status says nothing about the main point, which is that the Bible demonstrates that they were not, anyway, the Virgin Mary’s children.

Why are fundamentalists, particularly those most opposed to Catholicism, so insistent that Mary was not perpetually a virgin? There seem to be two reasons.

One is dislike of celibacy for priests and nuns. They are aware that it is Catholic teaching that celibacy is to be highly prized, that there is much virtue and much common sense in priests and nuns giving up the privilege of marriage in order to serve Christ better. They know Catholics refer to the example of Mary when praising consecrated virginity. So, by undermining her status, they hope to undermine that of priests and nuns. By claiming Mary did not live her life as a virgin, they hope to make religious celibacy seem contrary to the gospel.

The other reason concerns Mary herself. In the Catholic scheme of things,

she is certainly different from other women, so much so that she is considered worthy of special devotion (not of course of worship, *latria*, but of a level of honor, *hyperdulia*, higher than other saints receive). Her status accounts for the attention paid her. Fundamentalists think that what she gets, by way of devotion, is necessarily taken from Christ.

This is neither true nor logical, but they nevertheless think devotion to Mary must be discouraged if proper devotion to our Lord is to be maintained. One way to diminish her status is to show she was just like other women, more or less, and that can be done in part by showing she had other children. Their desire to do this tends to make impossible fundamentalists' accurate weighing of the facts. Their presuppositions do not allow them to see what the Bible really implies about the "brethren of the Lord".

Chapter 23

The Inquisition

Sooner or later, any exchange of views with fundamentalists will come around to the Inquisition. The topic can hardly be avoided. To non-Catholics the Inquisition is a scandal; to Catholics, an embarrassment; to both, a confusion. At the least, it is a handy stick with which to engage in Catholic-bashing, because most Catholics are at a loss for a sensible reply. The topic is so vast, its history so intricate, they do not know how to begin to respond to fundamentalists, even though few of the latter know the first thing about the Inquisition. What little they do know comes from tendentious little pamphlets written by people whose main interest is not historical accuracy.

The Inquisition was spread over six centuries and half a continent. It appeared first in southern France in response to Catharism and the civil discord that accompanied that religious and ideological plague, and later it was working, in fits and starts and in quite different formats, in Italy and the Holy Roman Empire, where it functioned for only a few decades in the thirteenth century. In between it was established in Spain, and there it became a creature of the state and was effectively out of the control of Church authorities.

Technically, five forms of the Inquisition may be distinguished. First came the episcopal, established in 1184 and operating mainly in France. Individual bishops ran the show, but not entirely well. Innocent III sought more control and established the legatine Inquisition, which was under the authority of the Cistercians. That was in 1198. Procedures were further formalized in 1231, when Gregory IX set up the monastic Inquisition, with the Dominicans in control. Commentators usually speak of these three forms as one institution, the Medieval Inquisition. It died out as Catharism disappeared.

Quite separate was the Roman Inquisition, begun in 1542 under Paul III. This was the one under which Galileo was tried, and it was the least active and most benign of the three main variations. Separate again was the Spanish Inquisition, begun in 1478, a state institution used to ferret out Jews and

Moors who converted to Christianity not out of conviction but for purposes of political or social advantage. It was the Spanish Inquisition that had the worst record.¹

Surprisingly enough, Loraine Boettner, the intellectual godfather of modern fundamentalist anti-Catholicism, has little to say about the Inquisition in his *Roman Catholicism*. One would think he would make more extensive use of the issue since it is such a fine weapon against the Church. He looks only at the Spanish Inquisition and then only briefly, relying mainly on an article appearing in *Christian Heritage* magazine in 1959. The author, Walter M. Montano, wrote that “it has been shown by [Juan Antonio] Llorente, who carefully examined the records of the Tribunal, and whose statements are drawn from the most authoritative sources, that 105,285 victims fell under the inquisitor general Torquemada; 51,167 under Cisneros; and 34,952 fell under Diego Perez. It is further reckoned that 31,912 were burned alive! Half that number, 15,659, suffered the punishment of the statute, and 291,450 were sent to penitentiaries. Half a million families were destroyed by the Inquisition, and it cost Spain two million children!”²

This quotation illustrates the reliability of sources used by fundamentalists such as Boettner, who does not inform the reader that Llorente, who had been appointed a secretary to the Inquisition in 1789, was hardly a responsible historian. In 1801 he was dismissed for alleged embezzlement. Although a Spaniard, he sided with the French when they invaded Spain in 1808. After the return of the Spanish king, Llorente retired to Paris, where in 1817 he published *The Critical History of the Spanish Inquisition*. He claimed to make use of official documents to which he said he had access, and it was from these documents he calculated the number of executions. When challenged on the figures, he said he had burned the papers on which he had relied.³ Critics have asked whether one can trust a man who says he destroyed original documents deliberately.

In any event, there is considerable dispute, even among honest historians, regarding how many deaths occurred under the Spanish Inquisition, and this is no place to settle that squabble. It is enough to note that responsible estimates vary, some historians asserting fewer than three thousand death sentences were handed down during three centuries, others putting the figure higher. As a point of comparison, Sir James Stephens, in his *History of English Criminal Law*, notes there were eight hundred executions a year during the early post-Reformation period in England, where the Inquisition

never operated.⁴ One could also refer to the burning of alleged witches, a practice almost unknown in Catholic countries. (Goethe, in his *Italienische Reise*, attributed the lack of belief in witches to Catholics' use of the confessional.)⁵ In Britain thirty thousand went to the stake for witchcraft; in Protestant Germany the figure was one hundred thousand.⁶ Such statistics do not make the Spanish executions right, but they perhaps indicate that severity in punishment was not due to Catholicism as such, but must be attributed to the general character of the times.

Most fundamentalists who write about the Inquisition rely on the books of Henry C. Lea (1825—1909), who published a massive three-volume account. His *History of the Inquisition in the Middle Ages*⁷ was called, in a priest's introduction to the French edition, "the most thorough history of the Inquisition which we possess". Remarkably enough, it is probably *still* the most thorough (at sixteen hundred pages, certainly the longest) history in English, for there have been few scholars willing to grapple with the all-encompassing historical analysis the institution demands.

It is unfortunate that it has been Lea's work that has molded public opinion in English-speaking countries, because, although it contains a great amount of data, it is marred by an unrelenting bias. "Honest he may be," said Elphege Vacandard, himself an authority on the Inquisition, "but impartial never. His pen too often gives way to his prejudices and his hatred of the Catholic Church. His critical judgment is sometimes gravely at fault."⁸ But his faults are virtues in the eyes of fundamentalists.

Lea was an American. His counterpart in England was Cambridge historian G. G. Coulton (1858—1947), an ardent foe of the Catholic Church and well known for his love of controversy. When the subject was Rome, the Cambridge don had difficulty containing himself. He might be known best for an exchange of letters he had with Arnold Lunn, the letters appearing as *Is the Catholic Church Anti-Social?* Lunn scolded Coulton for eating up an entire third of the book with a single letter that largely strayed from the agreed topic and focused instead on his pet anti-Catholic attacks.⁹ Coulton, too, is a favorite of literate fundamentalists.

Considering himself the English Lea, Coulton took pains to protect his mentor's reputation. Herbert Thurston, an English Jesuit who remarked that Lea's "work abounded in reckless deductions from inadequate evidence", said one could find ten palpable blunders on any ten consecutive pages of

Lea's books,¹⁰ Coulton, incensed, challenged him to prove it, had an associate select ten pages from Lea at random, and, in an act of magnanimity, threw in two pages extra. To his consternation Thurston pointed out fifteen blunders in the twelve pages. Coulton acknowledged to Lunn that Lea "had stumbled badly" and admitted his own "mistaken credulity".¹¹

One cannot conclude from this anecdote that all Lea and Coulton wrote about the Inquisition was wrong. They made real progress in basic research. Proper credit should not be denied them. The problem is that they could not weigh the facts properly because they were burdened with fierce animosity toward the Church—animosity that had nothing to do with the Inquisition as such. Their prejudices hindered them in separating reliable information from unreliable. They were too quick to accept statements unfavorable to the Church, too slow to dismiss statements inspired by malice similar to their own.

Of course, the contrary problem has not been unknown. Some Catholic writers, particularly those less interested in digging for truth than in giving a quick excuse, have glossed over incontrovertible facts and done what they could to whitewash the Inquisition, reminding one of hagiographers who reduce saints from human beings to porcelain dolls by ignoring awkward facts in their lives. This is as much a disservice to the truth as exaggerating the Inquisition's bad points. These well-intentioned but misguided Catholic apologists are, in one respect at least, much like Lea, Coulton, and the present strain of anti-Catholic fundamentalists. They fear, as the others hope, that the facts about the Inquisition will demonstrate the illegitimacy of the Catholic Church. But the facts will not do that at all. The Church has nothing to fear from the truth or a right appreciation of it. No account of foolishness, misguided zeal, or cruelty by Catholics can undo the divine foundation of the Church, although admittedly such things are stumbling blocks to Catholic and non-Catholic alike. What must be grasped is that the Church contains within itself all sorts of sinners and knaves, and some of them reach high rank. The wheat and chaff coexist in the Kingdom until the end, and that was how the Founder intended it.

The problem for fundamentalists is that they perceive the Church to contain only the elect. For them, sinners are outside the doors. Locate sinners, and one locates another place where the Church is not. It is easy to demonstrate sin operating through the Inquisition, at least to the extent dry records allow us to perceive sin at the remove of centuries, and for the

fundamentalist this proves the Inquisition, if it was the arm of a church, was the arm of a false church. Catholics, thinking fundamentalists might have a point, tend to be defensive. That is the wrong attitude. The right attitude for Catholics is to discover what really happened and to understand the Inquisition *in situ*—and then to explain to anti-Catholics, hard although this may be, why the sorry tale does not prove what they think it proves.

There can be no Catholic who would not wish that the Inquisition—or at least its bad elements, which were not coextensive with it—had never happened. In many respects, it was a logical consequence of the times and, for all its gore, not easily distinguishable from civil courts in its procedures and punishments, but the fact that cruelty can be found elsewhere in old records does not justify the cruelty that operated through the inquisitorial process.

How should a Catholic answer charges about the Inquisition? He should not attempt to deny the undeniable; history cannot be wished away. On the other hand, he should not, out of embarrassment, acquiesce in every fundamentalist slander. What he should try to do is give his questioner a little perspective. If he is able, the Catholic should learn enough about the Inquisition to give his opponent some sort of overview and to demonstrate that while much of what he knows about the Inquisition is true in quality, it is wrong in quantity. If understood, this may help the fundamentalist see that the mere existence of the Inquisition does not disprove the Church's credentials.

Many fundamentalists believe that more people died under the Inquisition than in any war or plague, but in this they rely on ridiculous “statistics” generated by one-upmanship among anti-Catholics, each of whom, it seems, tries to come up with the largest number of casualties. Trying to straighten out such historical confusions can take one only so far, of course, and one should not put undue emphasis on numbers. As Ronald Knox said, we should be cautious, “lest we should wander interminably in a wilderness of comparative atrocity statistics”.¹² In fact, no one knows how many people perished through the Inquisition. We happen to live in a century of statistics. Everything is quantified, and we save records the way squirrels save acorns, but often with far less reason. It is difficult for us to appreciate that in earlier centuries statistical abstracts were not drawn up because people saw no need for them. We do, indeed, have some records of how many people were executed, but they are spotty. No doubt most such records just disappeared

over the centuries, and there were probably few to begin with. We can make at best rough estimates of the number of deaths.

We can determine for certain, though, two things about the numbers given by most fundamentalists: they are exaggerated or, worse, fabrications. It would be one thing to err in extrapolations or calculations. An error of 100 or even 500 percent would not be large in piecing together what facts are available. But an error of 2.5 million percent? If you take the conservative figure that some Catholic scholars accept (around four thousand executions total, throughout the history of the Inquisition, in all countries where it operated), that is roughly the size of the error in the figure given in *The Mystery of Babylon Revealed*, a book that states that 95 million people were killed during the Inquisition.¹³

The figure of 95 million deaths is so grotesquely off that one immediately doubts the writer's sanity or at least his grasp of the elementary facts of demographics. Not until modern times did the population of the whole of Europe approach million.¹⁴ The Inquisition did not operate in England, Scandinavia, Northern Europe, or Eastern Europe. Although on paper its extent was wide, in practice it was confined almost entirely to southern France, Italy, Spain, and a few parts of the Holy Roman Empire. The Black Death, which killed about a third of Europe's population, is credited by historians with major changes in the social structure. The Inquisition is credited with few, precisely because the number of its victims was by comparison small.

Far better than wasting time arguing about statistics that can only be roughly approximated or about numbers taken out of a magician's hat, the Catholic should ask the fundamentalist what he thinks the existence of the Inquisition demonstrates. After all, no fundamentalist will bring up the subject unless he thinks it proves something about the Catholic Church. What is that something? That the Church contains sinners? Guilty as charged. That at times sinners have reached positions of authority? Ditto. That even otherwise good Catholics, afire with zeal, sometimes lose their balance? True, all true, but such charges could be made and verified even if the Inquisition never existed.

Fundamentalist writers claim the Inquisition reveals the Catholic Church could not be the Church founded by Christ. They use the Inquisition as a good—perhaps their best—bad example. Yet to call an institution into question is not to prove it false, and the Church has not been false to its

commission. Individual Catholics, yes—it has always been that way, since the denials of Peter, and it will continue that way until the end—but no degree of un-saintliness on the part of Catholics proves the Church to be other than what it claims to be, even though that unsaintliness puts grave obstacles in the path of people outside and inside the Church. As a practical matter, there is only so much mileage in the anti-Catholics' argument, and they recognize it; most people perceive at once its weakness, how it can apply equally against Reformation Christianity. If the Inquisition establishes the falsity of Catholicism, the witch trials establish the falsity of Protestantism.

Perhaps a more compelling, if often unstated, reason fundamentalists bring up the Inquisition is that they think it was begun to “liquidate” fundamentalists. They identify themselves with Catharists (also known as Albigensians), or perhaps it is better to say they identify Catharists with themselves. They think Catharists were twelfth-century fundamentalists and that the Catholic Church did to them just what it would do to fundamentalists today if it had the means. This is a fantasy. Fundamentalist writers take one point—that Catharists used a vernacular version of the Bible—and conclude that these people were “Bible Christians”. The truth is that they were hardly Christians at all. Theirs was a curious heresy that perhaps (no one knows for sure) came to France from what is now Bulgaria. Catharism was a mixture of Gnosticism, which claimed a secret source of religious knowledge, and Manichaeism, which said matter is evil, and it had serious, civilization-destroying, social consequences.

Marriage was scorned because it legitimized sexual relations, which Catharists identified as the original sin. Concubinage was permitted because it was temporary and secret and was not given formal approval, while marriage was permanent, open, and publicly sanctioned. The consequences from such theories are not hard to imagine.

There was one key sacrament, the *consolamentum*, which could be received only once and which was absolutely necessary for salvation. Any sin committed after receiving the *consolamentum* deprived one of heaven. The Catharist thus waited until he was on his deathbed to receive his “baptism”. What followed next, for those who did not die promptly of natural causes, was the *endura*, which was not readily distinguishable from euthanasia. If the Catharist wanted to die as a “martyr”, he was suffocated with a pillow. If he wanted to go out as a “confessor”, he was starved to death. Religious

authorities would reside in the home of the dying Catharist to ensure his family did not sneak food in.

There was also a political angle to the heresy. Feudal society was based on the oath of fealty, much as ours is based on contract. Catharists denied the lawfulness of oaths, and that threatened to undermine the social fabric; imagine what would happen today if all contractual obligations, no matter how old or well established, were suddenly eliminated. Catharists interpreted Christ's words to Peter concerning tribute money ("then the children are free"; Mt 17:25) as authorizing them to withhold taxes and to refuse allegiance to secular rulers. Catharism was both a moral and a political evil. Even Lea admitted "the cause of orthodoxy was the cause of progress and civilization. Had Catharism become dominant, or even had it been allowed to exist on equal terms, its influence could not have failed to become disastrous." Whatever else might be said about Catharism, it was certainly not the same as modern fundamentalism, and fundamentalists' sympathy with the heresy is sadly misplaced.

What is needed by all disputants is perspective. Catholics in particular, if they want to see a discussion of the Inquisition result in understanding rather than fisticuffs, need to appreciate what is really in question. At one time Catholic apologists tried to justify all aspects of the Inquisition. That was foolish. There has never been any need for a whitewash. Today many Catholics fail to understand what fundamentalists are driving at, and they restrict themselves to secondary matters. Instead, they should discover what fundamentalists are trying to prove with their talk about hecatombs.

Granted, there is a certain utility, but a decidedly limited one, in demonstrating that the kinds and degrees of punishments inflicted by the Inquisition were similar to or even lighter than those generally meted out by secular courts. It is equally true that, despite what we consider the Inquisition's lamentable procedures, many people preferred to have their cases tried by ecclesiastical courts because the secular courts had fewer safeguards; indeed, when the Inquisition was abolished in Spain, people rioted in favor of its return. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* remarks accurately that "it is well known that belief in the justice of punishing heresy with death was so common among the sixteenth-century reformers—Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, and their adherents—that we may say their toleration began where their power ended".¹⁵ Jean Guitton has noted that "we must measure the horror of the remedy by the horror of the disease".¹⁶ And, as some have

pointed out, we should keep in mind that as recently as fifty years ago, torture (“the third degree”) was routinely used even by American police. Such arguments are better suited to discussions with reasonably informed people than with fundamentalists who think they can injure Catholicism by talking about judicial practices that are universally acknowledged, now, to be unjust. “The Inquisition was punctilious in its adherence to law,” wrote Donald Attwater, “but after full allowance has been made for ‘other times, other manners’, some of its procedure[s] and punishments must be set down as utterly unreasonable and in consequence cruel.”¹⁷ One should not seek to justify them, but to explain them and, most importantly, to explain how they could have been associated with a divinely established Church and how, from their existence, it is not proper to conclude that the Church of Rome is not the Church of Christ. This is where any discussion should focus.

Chapter 24

Practical Apologetics

Almost everyone has been through it. There is a knock at the door, usually at some inconvenient hour, and outside is a man with a wide smile, an open Bible, and awkward questions, beginning with, “Have you been saved, friend?” When he discovers you are a Catholic, which you volunteer in hope it will frighten him away, he reaches into his valise and brings out several Catholic Bibles. “Which would you prefer we use—New American Bible, Jerusalem Bible, maybe the old Douay-Rheims?” You talk with him for what seems like hours, and finally he goes away with an air of triumph, while you retire with a sore throat.

Or the altercation—somehow it always ends up being an altercation—starts after Mass. You exit church to find people distributing leaflets opposing Catholic beliefs. If you so much as look one of them in the eye, he rushes over, and you cannot wriggle your way through the crowd fast enough to get away. “Here’s the truth about the idolatry of the Mass”, you are told in an insistent voice as a tract is pressed into your hands. “Read it.”

“No, thanks; not interested”, you say, so he tells you, word for word, just what you would have read and keeps backing you toward the curb until you engage him in talk or step into whizzing traffic. You try being brusque, but even that does not discourage him.

Perhaps it starts in a social setting. At your prolife meeting, once the business session is over and everyone settles back for a little conviviality and a spot of tea, fundamentalists search out the Catholics. You sit in the corner, trying to be unobtrusive, but one sidles up to you anyway and, before you can ask her opinion about the first nonreligious topic that comes to mind, she leans over and asks, “Wouldn’t you like to have an absolute assurance of salvation?”

“Sure,” you say, “but. . .” You are interrupted as she motions you to wait while she flips heavily underlined pages of the New Testament to find just the right rebuttal to the comment you had no chance to make, and from there

it is a long evening and all downhill.

These discussions, whether with the fellow at your door, the pamphleteer outside church, or the woman at the meeting, seem to go nowhere. You know things are being taken out of context, but you do not remember what the context is. There are snappy rejoinders edging toward the tip of your tongue, but they fail to pass through your teeth. (Later you will kick yourself for not being quick-witted.) If you put Catholic beliefs into your own, unconsidered words, you find instead you have put your foot in your mouth and confirmed your adversary's worst suspicions. For some questions you do not have the vaguest hint of an answer; in fact, you have the nagging suspicion that maybe, just maybe, your opponent is on to something, God forbid.

You end up dissatisfied, and no one—least of all you—seems at all convinced by what you have said. Quite the contrary. Your interlocutor appears more set in anti-Catholic prejudices than ever, and people around you, if there are any left by the time you are through, seem to be muttering under their breath, presumably about your descent from Caspar Milquetoast. You did not handle the situation well, and you know it.

If there is a moral to this, it is that knowing *how* to argue is just as important as knowing *what* to argue. If you have no appreciation of technique, all the knowledge in the world will not help since you will not be able to pass it along. You can be a walking theological treatise (which, Lord knows, you are not), but if you antagonize opponents or talk past them, you have wasted your time and theirs. It is not enough to be a good conversationalist. That will not make up for doctrinal or historical ignorance. Style without substance is worthless. To be an effective apologist, you must marry delivery and content.

In the earlier chapters of this book you learned about the anti-Catholic movement among fundamentalists, its origins, its arguments, and what can be said to counter its charges. In the next chapter you will learn what to read to deepen your understanding of Catholicism and fundamentalism. That done, you naturally will want to know how to put your newfound knowledge to work. You will begin by recalling the motto of the Benedictine monks, *ora et labora*. You will begin your apologetics work with prayer. You will accomplish nothing—not merely a little, mind you, but nothing at all—without a serious prayer life. Even good works, such as “instructing the ignorant”, will go nowhere unless you put everything into God's hands—and not just at the outset, but daily, in your studies, in your discussions, in your

frustrations. Yes, especially in your frustrations, which will be many because your successes will seem so meager, so few. They will be there, but many of them you will never see. Fundamentalists did not become what they are overnight, particularly those who converted from Catholicism, and most of them, even if they ultimately find rest at Rome, will not move toward the Church with any speed you can detect. In most cases you plant a seed and let it germinate on its own. If a few people ask for more assistance, you give it, but for every fundamentalist whose opinion of the Church seems to be mellowing, there will be ten who seem as firmly anti-Catholic as ever. You have to let grace take its course.

How should you pray for this kind of apostolate? One way that makes sense is to meditate on scriptural passages. Why? Because it does double duty. It is at once prayer and work, the work being the inescapable reading you must do in the Bible. No matter how fine your religious training, no matter how well you think you know doctrines or Church history, you need to be at home with Scripture if you intend to make an impression on fundamentalists. Of course, you should be conversant with the Bible anyway, not solely in preparation for controversy, but for its own sake—for *your* own sake.

If the only thing that gets you to open the Bible is umbrage at the latest anti-Catholic slander, that will do for starters. You might say it is like contrition versus attrition. Perfect contrition, sorrow arising out of love of God, is the ideal in confession, but you will have your sins forgiven if the best you can manage is attrition, fear of punishment. Reading the Bible because it is the word of God is better than reading it because you need to find replies to fundamentalists' accusations—but any port in a storm. The important thing is to start reading; once you do, it will be easy to make a habit of turning to the sacred text.

Concentrate on the New Testament, but not to the exclusion of the Old. It is more important to go through the New Testament a dozen times than to go through the Old twice. There is no need to memorize great chunks of the Bible, the way some fundamentalists do. You should be especially familiar, though, with the Gospels. If you are not at ease with the details of Christ's life, you are in trouble. Frank Sheed, the great street-corner apologist, put it this way: "A Catholic apologist who is not soaked in the Gospels is an anomaly in himself, and his work is doomed to aridity."¹

The New Testament is short enough to be read in the evenings of a single

week. Spend several weeks with it before doing anything else, paying particular attention to the Gospels, but not ignoring the Epistles. Work in the Old Testament gradually. Not all of the Old Testament is needed for your work, so do not worry if you take a year or two to get to parts of it, but do make an effort to read the historical and the major prophetic books as soon as possible. You should not, of course, read the Bible to the exclusion of other works because, if you do, you will end up lacking perspective, like many fundamentalists. Still, the Bible has to be the ground of your other reading.

But which Bible? It does little good to purchase the “best” version, whichever that may be objectively, if you will not read it. You are not interested in an ornament for the coffee table, but in a book you can pick up as comfortably as your favorite novel. The best version for you will be the version you will read. If the one you choose is what most people regard as an inferior edition, you can graduate to a superior one later. The first thing is to get in the habit of Bible reading. Once you do, it will be easy to take up a superior translation.

It might be wise to purchase several translations even if you know which you will use for your regular reading. The reason? To compare renderings. If you know no Greek, Hebrew, or Latin, the best way to get a feel for the meaning of a verse is to see how different translations phrase it. Particularly useful will be a cheap copy of the King James Version of the New Testament. Most fundamentalists use that translation—some not even knowing it *is* a translation but believing it is the original—and discussions are often made easier if their wording can be compared with yours, particularly since a number of their confusions arise from misunderstanding seventeenth-century diction.

You have heard the adage that “the exception proves the rule”. Of course, the exception *disproves* the rule, if you think about it, but that is using prove in the modern sense of substantiate. When the adage was not an adage but a current idiom, the word prove (coming from the Latin *probare*, from which we get our word probate) did not mean substantiate, but test. An exception was said to test, to bend, even to snap a rule, and in that sense the saying is quite true. When prove is used in the modern sense, the saying is flat-out wrong. It is this kind of confusion that afflicts some fundamentalists who insist on using the King James Version. They use twentieth-century instead of seventeenth-century definitions, and that puts them on the wrong track.

This can be demonstrated if you show them one or more modern translations alongside the King James.

Familiarize yourself with anti-Catholic literature. See what topics are emphasized: the Bible as the sole rule of faith, justification by faith alone, the “idolatry of the Mass”, “worship” of Mary and the saints, “Catholic inventions”, and much more. See how the arguments, weak as they are, are handled. You will perceive at once, if you have not already noticed, that anti-Catholic materials are skewed, but if you cannot think of complete and ready rejoinders, make notes and study up. It will hardly do to say, “I can’t remember why that’s wrong, but it is, and you’ll just have to take my word for it.” The Appendix gives addresses of some of the anti-Catholic organizations mentioned in this book; write for samples of their literature. Once you have understood their arguments and have learned more about your own faith, you will be ready to engage in friendly arguments.

There are two preliminary points to keep in mind when arguing with fundamentalists. The first is that there is nothing wrong, in itself, with arguing. Some people have the mistaken notion that all argumentation is uncharitable, but that tells more about their own arguing skills, or lack of them, than anything else. After all, people who find their own arguments resulting in fisticuffs do not really know how to argue and cannot be expected to think arguments can be profitable. The second point is that most fundamentalists welcome a good argument; they want to be challenged, and they want to see if their position “works”. Many of them have been trained to argue with Catholics whom they seek to evangelize, though, to be sure, they do not expect Catholics to argue back.

You will discover that most fundamentalists have a surprisingly limited repertoire of accusations. (Do not confuse them with the professional anti-Catholics, whose accusations are seemingly endless, which is to be expected of people who make their livings attacking Rome.) Most fundamentalists, even those trained for small-scale anti-Catholic work, have done far less reading in Catholicism than you already have done in fundamentalism, if you have read the previous chapters. They are told Catholics not only know nothing about the Bible, but little about their own Faith, so they expect to accost people who are pushovers. It is disturbing enough to them to find Catholics answering their questions instead of standing openmouthed; it is worse to be put on the defensive and to be forced to answer pointed questions about fundamentalism. This few of them are trained to do, and in short order

they take refuge in the plea that they need to check with their pastors. Do not gloat when you see them forced to make a strategic retreat. You soon might be “advancing toward the rear” yourself.

When arguing, do not argue to win. You can “win” yet drive people further from the Church. Argue to explain. Your task is to show fundamentalists the Catholic position from the inside, not to make cheap debater’s points. You must scrupulously avoid striving for quick victories with which to impress onlookers, and you must realize that each time you sink to the *ad hominem*, you alienate another listener and the Church loses another present or prospective member. People who interpret “argument” to mean raised voices, large gesticulations, and cutting remarks are not suited to apologetics. All these are out. The skills of a good apologist are not the same as the skills of a good orator or a good debater, much less of a second-class orator or debater. Instead, strive for the skills of a good missionary, because that is what an apologist is.

This work is not for people with thin skins or short fuses. Losing your temper, or being thrown off balance by someone who loses his, means you have lost an opportunity for clearing away mental cobwebs. If you take offense at being called pagan or blasphemous or stupid when explaining Catholic doctrines, if you flaunt your annoyance and cannot help shaking your head when confronted with unthinking comments, find some other way to occupy your spare time.

If you stick with apologetics, you will discover soon enough the lure of verbal combat, which, although an unbloody warfare, can leave wounds every bit as lethal as those inflicted with regular munitions. It must be done right or not at all. Remember, you are not opposing fundamentalism so much as explaining Catholicism; your work is essentially positive and constructive, not negative and destructive. To the extent you do oppose fundamentalism (after all, error should be countered, even when mixed with truth), make sure you oppose fundamentalism and not fundamentalists.

Not everyone opposing the Catholic religion is a loon or is working in bad faith, and, if you cannot appreciate that, you will do more harm than good. Few fundamentalists, even those who are actively anti-Catholic, do what they do out of spite. They are working with clear consciences, but they have been misinformed. Perhaps they should have done more homework, but the fault is not entirely theirs. They trust the sources they have had, but now they should be *shown there is* more to consider. You will not get them to open their

minds by encouraging them to close their hearts. Hatred directed against the Church cannot be offset by hatred on behalf of the Church. You must approach fundamentalists in charity.

When you do enter discussions, avoid verse-slinging. It accomplishes little. A barrage of biblical citations overwhelms only those ignorant of the Bible. The first time fundamentalists cornered you with verses that were unfamiliar, you did not know what to say. You had not even heard some of the lines before, and the rest, in an odd translation, sounded not quite right. True, you were unconvinced by this tactic, but you *were* thrown for a loop. Later, you did your homework and learned there was nothing to fear. The verses, if read in context, really supported the Catholic Faith, just as this way of arguing no longer impresses you, if it ever did, it does not impress fundamentalists who find Catholics using it in return. They already have a fixed interpretation of each line of the Bible, and their interpretations cannot be overcome by your quoting the text and stopping there. Mere quotation is not enough. You have to go step by step, explaining what each verse means, but before you do that, you have to give an overview of the subject under discussion. Tossing quotations left and right is a waste of time.

Do not go to the other extreme and fail to use biblical citations. They are absolutely necessary if you want to make your points effectively. What is to be avoided is the carefree tossing around of verses that only seem to be related, usually because they have a word in common. For example, to refute the Catholic notion that “rock” in Matthew 16:18 refers to Peter, fundamentalists list as many verses as they can find in which “rock” refers to God. They do not bother to look at Matthew 16:18 in itself, and they forget that the whole point of the verse is precisely that Peter was being given a title usually reserved to God—and what did *that* signify?

Your goal is to reorient your listeners, giving them a new perspective. Remember, they think they take their beliefs straight from the Bible. In fact, the Bible is used to substantiate already-held beliefs. They begin with their own “tradition”, which is generally their pastor’s interpretation of the Bible. For many fundamentalists, their pastor is their pope. They accept his every word. When confronted with hard questions, they do not turn to the Bible to discover the answers; they say instead, “Let us ask our pastor.” What is more, their faith is largely colored by the church they attend. Some denominations emphasize one aspect of belief; others emphasize others. The assurance of salvation is the subject of the majority of sermons at some churches, the

Second Coming at others, and baptism by immersion at still others. Congregants will be especially familiar with scriptural passages relating to their pastor's favorite doctrines, will be less familiar with passages relating to other fundamentalist doctrines, and might be quite unfamiliar with the rest of the Bible.

You must enter discussions with a plan. Know what the main points should be, and then stick with them. All anti-Catholics concentrate on a few scriptural passages that seem damaging to Catholicism. Take the initiative. Address their points, but do not allow them to ask all the questions. Ask your own. You of course must know how to respond to their standard charges, but be prepared to bring up issues they conveniently skip. Put them on the spot and point out the weaknesses of fundamentalism. Do this not to demonstrate how smart you were for choosing the Catholic Church, but to emphasize that although much of what they hold is true, some is not, and for the fullness of truth they need to look to Rome.

One of the most annoying things in getting into a conversation with evangelistic fundamentalists (that is not redundant: not all of them are evangelistic) is that you do not seem to get a word in edgewise. You do not seem to be able to steer the conversation your way. The less well versed you are in Catholicism, the worse the problem. The discussion may start with the most common question, "Are you saved?" Or it may start with any of several standard openings. It seems as though you hardly start to form a reply when more questions are thrown at you, each leading you further into uncharted areas. You feel adrift, unable to turn to a topic on which you have done your homework. By the time your interlocutor decamps, you feel stymied, having given no good answers and having posed no good questions.

You need to learn a few techniques for taking charge. Here is one, and it is simple: sidestep the first question and pose your own, so you can turn the conversation to your favorite topic. It is not at all rude to do this; you are under no obligation to let yourself be led around by the nose. Until you are at ease with all the major issues, so that you can handle any likely opening by fundamentalists, you may *have* to do this if you want to get anywhere in your apologetics work.

The way to do it is to use Jesus' ploy (though of course he did not do this for the reasons you would), Recall how he responded when the chief priests and elders approached him and asked, "What authority have you for acting like this? And who gave you this authority?" Jesus said, "I will ask you a

question, just one; if you tell me the answer to it, then I will tell you my authority for acting like this” (Mt 21:23-24). He took charge of the discussion by bringing up the point he wanted to discuss, by setting aside his questioners’ topic.

Do the same kind of thing yourself. Let us assume you are asked, “Where does the Bible mention purgatory?” And let us assume you are not up to discussing purgatory, having not done your homework, but are up to discussing the notion of *sola scriptura*. You can use this approach: “I’d be happy to talk about that if we can first talk about why you think the Bible is the sole rule of faith. After all, your question implies we should look to the Bible alone. I want you to substantiate your belief, since, so far as I understand it, the Bible nowhere says it is the sole rule of faith.” Then take it from there. Follow up with more questions. You may or may not get back to purgatory—if you do, you will just have to wing it—but you will steer the conversation (mainly) to topics on which you are prepared.

Now of course this is an expedient, not an ideal. In point of fact you should be able to explain purgatory, but you have to operate based on how things are, not on how they ought to be. You cannot become a theological whiz overnight. You can discuss only what you know, and, until you can handle most topics with facility, you will have to be able to turn conversations to topics with which you are at ease. It would be nice to wait until you had every issue, major and minor, down pat, but are you going to want to start engaging in apologetics as a nonagenarian? Work with what you have, and learn what more you can, but do not keep the bench warm waiting for a revelation.

Keep in mind that your fundamentalist opponents are not really any more knowledgeable than you are today—quite possibly less. They seem more knowledgeable because they pose the first question and usually steer the conversation, yet they can get flustered easily. Their success, like the aura of invincibility they exude, depends entirely on your ignorance. As likely as not, they would not know what to say if you made intelligent responses or posed tough questions of your own. They have been trained much like the newspaper boy who comes to the door with a memorized patter. You have seen it often enough. If the boy recalls his lines, and if you keep your mouth shut, everything goes well, and he might have a new subscriber. If you ask him anything about the paper other than the price, he does not know what to say. His delivery depends on your allowing him to stick with his canned talk.

It is the same with most fundamentalists. They undergo a short course in “soul winning” and are trained to recite a fixed patter on the assumption that people they talk to, including virtually all Catholics, do not know enough about Christianity to ask tough questions of their own. The fundamentalists’ instructors are mostly right in training them this way. The technique works well, which is why it is used. They expect to have doors slammed in their faces, but they do not expect to be talked back to—at least not intelligently. When you throw out a question of your own and take charge of the conversation, as often as not they do not know what to say. They have been told how to go about “soul winning”, but they receive little training in being on the defensive. Why prepare for the statistically improbable? By taking charge of the discussion, you not only keep yourself from getting frustrated, you get to evangelize the evangelist. The discussion over, retire to your study and bone up on one of the topics you are still unsure about.

By the way, never be afraid to acknowledge ignorance. If you do not know the answer to a question, say so. You will survive, and so will your ego. The answers you give on other points will be taken more seriously if people you speak with see you are not trying to bluster your way through a conversation. There is nothing easier to spot than a fake.

You must be absolutely honest. Never pretend doctrines or facts are other than they really are. Do not avoid the hard cases, but do not pander to your listeners either. Never succumb to the temptation to tell them what they want to hear or, more commonly, not to tell them what they do not want to hear. Christ informed the people of his day that there would be many things difficult to accept in his teaching. Acceptance has gotten no easier. Whether doctrinal or moral, there is no need to try to make hard truths palatable. Just state them as they are, but first know what they are. Admit your ignorance (to yourself at least), then do your homework. An embarrassment today can result in fuller understanding—and better apologetics—tomorrow.

Early on, discuss the history of the Bible. You need to make plain it was the Church that formed the Bible, not the Bible that formed the Church. Note, too, that the New Testament was not designed as a catechism. Its various parts were written to people who already were Christians, so it could not have been intended as the sole source of religious teaching. In the beginning, teaching was oral and was under the authority of the Church, which eventually decided what books belonged to the Bible and what did not.

Fundamentalists say, “Let us start by admitting that the Bible is the sole

rule of faith.” Translation: “Let us admit the Church has no authoritative role; all answers to religious questions are to be found on the face of Scripture only.” Do not agree to it. It just begs the question, and it is untrue. As a counter, ask your opponents to try to prove that the Bible was intended to be the sole rule of faith. The Bible itself makes no such claim (it calls itself “profitable” for salvation, not the sole rule of faith), but you have to know which verses to cite to prove that.

Fundamentalists also say that if a doctrine is not clearly in the Bible, it is not a doctrine to be held by Christians. This ignores what the Bible really is and what it is not. As Frank Sheed put it in one of his last books, *Death into Life*, “The Gospels give a selection of what Christ did and said, with each writer choosing the elements needed for the portrait he was drawing. The Epistles were for the most part written as the occasion arose—some point of doctrine was being misinterpreted, perhaps. Thus one cannot argue from the silence of the New Testament that any particular doctrine was not being taught. Purgatory for instance!”²

No matter how well they have memorized it, fundamentalists know little other than the Bible, which they know only selectively. They know little Church history, little formal theology. They may never have seen a catechism. You must provide the larger picture. If the topic is an interpretation of a scriptural passage, go to a good commentary and study up, but also go straight to the Fathers of the Church to learn what they wrote about the subject and to books dealing with the history of doctrines and Catholic customs. Appeals to early Christian writers are often useful. Explain to your listeners that finding out what the first Christians understood the apostles to teach is crucial. Make them see it is unlikely that people who were writing when the Church was young and memories of Christ were vivid would erroneously report what beliefs the early Church started with or how it interpreted Scripture. If early Christian writers took it for granted that a sacrificial priesthood was established by Christ (which they did), that fact is a powerful argument in support of the priesthood. If writers living a few generations after Christ mentioned the Real Presence (which they did), that argues in favor of the Catholic interpretation of John 6. Try to show a doctrine in relation to other doctrines, a custom in relation to other customs, New Testament times in relation to the immediately following centuries. It is important for fundamentalists to see the Church and Church history as a totality. You will have to show them how everything fits together.

Ecclesiastical history is a messy discipline. It is not nearly as well formed as dogmatic or moral theology. Even if you never are inclined to misrepresent teachings of the Church, you might be tempted to put an unwarrantedly good face on some event or person in its history. There is a tendency to want every Catholic to look good in everything he does, to have him make the right decisions at all times, as though he had been blessed with preternatural prescience. Conversely, there is a temptation to think someone outside the Church is always working in bad faith.

It is a mistake to paint historical characters in white and black only, each Catholic being angelic, each Protestant devilish. If you approach history that way, you either will make no progress in understanding it, or your first impressions soon will be discarded as you discover the humanity of the people behind the events. We begin our reading or writing, naturally enough, with certain predispositions, but these need to be refined as we progress—or we are not progressing at all.

In the preface to his masterwork, *Enthusiasm*, Ronald Knox noted he had been writing the book “for thirty years and a little more; no year has passed but I have added to it, patched it, rewritten it, in the time that could be spared from other occupations”. It did not turn out as he first thought it would.

To be sure, when the plan of the Book was first conceived, all those years ago, it was to have been a broadside, a trumpet-blast, an end of controversy. . . . [H]ere, I would say, is what happens inevitably, if once the principle of Catholic unity is lost! All this confusion, this priggishness, this pedantry, this eccentricity and worse, follows directly from the rash step that takes you outside the fold of Peter! All my historical figures, Wesley himself included, were to be a kind of rogues’ gallery, an awful warning against illuminism. But somehow, in the writing, my whole treatment of the subject became different; the more you got to know the men, the more human did they become, for better or worse.³

In a way, Knox ended up admiring John Wesley, “a man so far in reaction from the tendencies of his age that he seems a living commentary on them, yet so much a child of his age that you cannot think of him fitting in with any other”.⁴ Knox could write about the plain’ goodness of the man and still remark that his message and that of his followers “was simple only in so far as they left nine-tenths of Christian doctrine out of consideration, and concentrated on the remaining tenth—soteriology”,⁵ a comment that applies perfectly to today’s fundamentalists, in so many ways the heirs of Wesley, although they may not realize it. To be sure, no modern fundamentalists, overtly anti-Catholic or otherwise, can be put on Wesley’s plane, but the

point Knox was making applies to them still: these are, in the main, good people, and grace has not passed them by.

Just as you should not presume the worst on the part of Protestants, do not get into the habit of swallowing everything said or done by Catholics. It may astonish some to learn that on occasion individual Catholics have been wrong, their Protestant opponents right—the Catholics having missed the truly Catholic position on an issue, the Protestants having stumbled across it. What is more, the number of canonized saints is small, and with good reason. Even with all the spiritual wellsprings found in the Church, many of its members fare poorly, at least in comparison to their hopes and everyone else's expectations. We are consistently off the mark—but we would be lost entirely if it were not for the Church.

When talk turns to awkward points of Church history, do not misrepresent them. Do not hide blemishes. There is no need to. Put things in context, and remind your listeners that the Kingdom of God (a term that, in the Bible, usually refers to the Church rather than heaven) contains wheat and chaff, saints and sinners. But be careful how you phrase rebuttals. Here is a cautionary example.

Fundamentalists with a little knowledge of the papacy will inquire about the “bad Popes”. A few decades ago, among Catholic apologists it was considered clever to answer in this vein: “Yes, there have been some ‘bad Popes’, perhaps six or seven men being truly unworthy of the office. Given the large number of Popes, this is a proportion of about one in forty. On the other hand, one in twelve of the men Christ himself chose turned out bad.” True, but not convincing by itself. No, you have to approach the problem in a different way. Mere cleverness will not do.

Sarcasm will not do either. Sarcasm always backfires. Avoid it even when your opponents stoop to it. When they do, their consciences will annoy them later; if their consciences are dormant, things will eventually catch up with them anyway. Do not allow them to justify their rudeness by exchanging wisecrack for wisecrack. Keep clear of name-calling. If you see a fundamentalist thumping a Bible (and some do so, quite literally), do not refer to him as a Bible thumper, even if he sneeringly calls you a papist or Romanist or something worse. Allow him the title of Christian, even if he will not return the favor.

Granted, at times the temptation to give as one has received will be overpowering; make a resolution not to repeat the offense, then continue with

your work. Ignoring rudeness is usually easier to accomplish when it comes to you in a letter rather than straight to your face. A letter you can put aside until your temper cools, but an oral insult seems to call for an instant and thus unreflecting response. Make a real effort to keep your tongue in check.

To argue effectively, you not only will have to control your temper; you also will have to know what fundamentalists mean by particular terms. You can waste much time by discussing two different things while using the same terminology. Consider faith. For Catholics, faith is the acceptance of revealed truths, doctrines, on God's word alone. This is called theological or confessional faith. For fundamentalists, faith is trust in Christ's promises, not belief in a set of dogmas. This is called fiducial faith. Tradition is another confusing term. In the New Testament are injunctions not to adhere to the "traditions of men". When fundamentalists hear Catholics say the twin sources of revealed truth are Scripture and Tradition, they equate Tradition with "traditions of men", and they conclude the Catholic Church is contradicting the Bible directly. Terms you might think can be taken only univocally, such as inspiration and heaven, can mean something quite different to fundamentalists.

Avoid technical words unless a thorough grounding has been laid. Even Catholics misunderstand what is meant by transubstantiation, Immaculate Conception, and hypostatic union. On the other hand, do not be monosyllabic. To oversimplify is to sidestep fine points, which is equally bad. Do not presume a question means what it seems to mean. Find out what your inquirers really are talking about. Take time. If the question refers to the Virgin Birth, make sure they do not mean the birth of the Virgin. Take up a single topic at a time; look at it leisurely, from several angles, and never presume fundamentalists know what you mean by apparently simple terms such as soul, revelation, Mass. If they did, they would not have such odd ideas of what the Church stands for. You have to speak with them the way you would speak with uninstructed Catholics.

Keep your expectations modest. Do not expect conversions, because they are not overnight things. Count yourself successful if your opponents leave with the feeling that there is a sensible, even if not acceptable, Catholic response to each of their charges. It would be a great triumph just to have an active anti-Catholic withdraw from the fray and mull things over. You have to give things time.

After all, no one is born anti-Catholic. There are not even any "cradle anti-

Catholics” to parallel “cradle Catholics”. Often the most vituperative foes of the Church, both within and without fundamentalism, are former Catholics who left the Church as adults. Their leaving was a slow process of unperceived difficulties turning into doubts, of doubts turning into denials, of denials turning into affirmations of new doctrines. To expect a sudden reconversion is to ignore human nature.

Fundamentalists think Catholics have no answers at all to the usual charges and believe a few snappy questions are all it takes to transfix a Catholic, to leave him dumbfounded, groping helplessly for answers that are not there. They forget that while their “born-again” experience may have been of a moment’s duration, it came only after a long leave-taking of the Catholic religion. They did not fall away from their old Faith in an instant, as though struck down on the Damascus Road.

Similarly, their return, if there is to be one, will not be quick. It will take months, even years, before they begin to see the Church as it really is and begin to shed their prejudices, each prejudice acquired with difficulty and let go with even more. So, if an active anti-Catholic sits things out for a while, that is as much as can be expected. If he at length gets a few things straight about Catholicism, there likely will follow an avalanche of understanding. Perhaps he will come all the way home, either with your help or on his own, or he may remain a fundamentalist while ceasing to be an anti-Catholic. Although you would wish more for him personally, defusing an agent of anti-Catholic bigotry would be a success in itself, because that would mean fewer Catholics would be enticed out of the Church before they could be authentically catechized (or recatechized, as the case may be) and fewer fundamentalists would have their prejudices reinforced.

From the beginning you must make those outside see what the Church’s positions really *are*. Do not start by justifying Catholic doctrines through apposite Bible passages or appeals to syllogistic reasoning. Those can be effective techniques, and at some point they will be necessary, but at the very beginning they invite digressions. First you need to show your listeners what the Church really teaches. They almost always will have preconceived and quite wrong notions.

Your first task, then, and often your hardest, is to get terminology straight and to be able to explain, in your own words, what Catholics hold. Only once the doctrines are understood in themselves should you turn to their justifications, but showing what doctrines mean is the principal task you

have. Until you do that, you cannot move forward. Once you have the definitions clear, fundamentalists, like other non-Catholics who have gone through similar instruction, will want to learn more because they will have been introduced to something fresh, something whole, something fulfilling. They will have glimpsed the unity of Christianity for the first time.

Chapter 25

Food for the Mind

The prospective apologist needs thorough preparation, both in answering specific questions and in preparing a stronger general foundation for his own faith. The books discussed in this chapter will transform an average Catholic whose gut feelings are right into one who not only knows the answers to the questions that used to stump him, but now can pass on his newfound learning in away that others, far more confused than he ever was, can understand. These books are not the only ones worthy of study, of course, but they have proved particularly useful in the specialized task of dealing with fundamentalist attacks on the Catholic religion.¹

In what order these books will be read will depend largely on one's predispositions. Some can be taken up and put down at leisure; reading in snatches is quite sufficient. Others need to be read in a more sustained fashion—not in one evening necessarily, assuming that is even possible for people not afflicted with insomnia, but over a short period of time. One needs to set aside time daily so the first chapter is not forgotten by the time the last is reached. Just as the story line can be lost if one puts down a novel for any length of time, so the overall picture some of these books were designed to give will not be apprehended if one dallies in reading them.

Some of the material will have to be gone over more than once—you will want to read some things several times, just for your own enjoyment—and even then, after all this work, you will still need access to other, more detailed works, such as the *Catholic Encyclopedia* (the preferred 1914 edition, available through Catholic used-book dealers) or the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (1967 edition, inferior in coverage but adequate).

The Catholic unsure of his intellectual stamina should not be scared off. He does not have to try to devour the whole pie. Much good can be done, both for oneself and for non-Catholics, by getting the basics, by reading only the key works. (Anyone who would read the whole of an encyclopedia is an indiscriminating pedant and would never make it as an apologist!)²

Keep in mind that it is not enough to have absorbed general overviews of Catholicism, however good they might be. That will not prepare you to withstand a barrage of criticism. You will wilt under the onslaught of specific and often surprising questions, each of which needs to be handled if people confused about the Faith are to have their doubts cleared up. The trouble is that writers of surveys of Catholicism do not ask tough questions or put you on the spot. That is not their purpose. They presume you are predisposed to the Faith and are seeking to broaden your knowledge generally. That is admirable and necessary, but you can have a general grasp yet be unable to say anything sensible to fundamentalists when they question you, because their questions throw you for a loop. You will rarely guess correctly how they will phrase their accusations, because your presuppositions are different. It takes a Catholic considerable training and a long tenure in the school of hard knocks to begin to think like a fundamentalist, to pose the kinds of questions fundamentalists pose.

To get a feel for what you would be up against, particularly if you want to do apologetics work on a serious basis, you need to see just what fundamentalists say about the Church—and in their own words. Write to anti-Catholic organizations (see the Appendix for addresses) and request sample literature. Some Catholics hesitate doing this. They cannot bear giving professional anti-Catholics a penny. They think doing so is almost treasonous. The feeling is understandable, but it is a matter of false scruples. If you were a military commander and your counterpart on the other side had written a book outlining his tactical theories, you would be wise to let him have the royalties and get a copy of his book into your hands as soon as possible. You would owe it to your cause.

So write away for anti-Catholic literature, study it, and learn on which topics you need help, but do not limit yourself to acquiring tracts. No collection of anti-Catholic material would be complete without a copy of Loraine Boettner's *Roman Catholicism*.³ Many Protestant bookstores carry it; if it cannot be found on the shelves, it can be ordered through them or through any other bookstore. Although a fat hardback, it is cheap, and some fundamentalist and evangelical bookstores carry it at a good discount over the already-low cover price, perhaps a prime reason it has been disseminated so widely.

The core of many arguments, historical or otherwise, will be the Bible, and the apologist needs to be at ease with it. Fundamentalists often work on the

principle that the Bible is such a straightforward book that any literate person can pick it up and, without much trouble, find the correct interpretation of any passage, presuming he has been “born again”. Those not reborn, in the fundamentalists’ sense of the term, have no guarantee they will arrive at the right understanding.

Fundamentalists think the intervening centuries have not made the Bible any more confusing for us than it was for people who lived in New Testament times, and they think that way (although they do not realize it) because they begin, not with the Bible, but with an accepted set of beliefs, which they then substantiate by “searching the Scriptures”.

The truth is that the Bible is both an easy and a difficult book. It is easy in its language—no jargon or bureaucratese here—but it is difficult in that it is not really one book, but six dozen books composed over centuries for a variety of reasons and audiences. No sacred writer thought, as he sat down with pen and papyrus, that he was adding the *nth* chapter to a single book in the way that, some years ago, there was a fad among writers of detective stories to compose books each chapter of which was by a different author and was built directly on the chapters preceding.⁴ No, the Bible is better thought of as a miscellany. The New Testament alone has several kinds of writings: four partially overlapping biographies, something at once a history and a travelogue, private letters written to individuals and open ones written to small communities, and an example of a peculiar kind of literature, the apocalyptic. The same goes for the Old Testament, which contains still other kinds of works: law codes, prophetic utterances, poetry, even an extended love song.

The Catholic needs to read the Bible, of course, and to read it regularly, but that is hardly enough. He needs also works that will make up for time lost, that will give him insights that he might reach only after decades of assiduous and prayerful reading of the sacred text, and he needs an appreciation of the background of the Bible, of the kinds of works it contains, and of methods and theories of interpretation. Only when he has this will his Bible reading turn truly fruitful.

The first thing, then, after securing one or more translations of the Bible itself, to buy is a commentary. Still available from used-book dealers is *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*,⁵ published in Britain in 1953 and using the Douay-Rheims translation. The editorial committee was headed by Bernard Orchard, and contributors included such men as B. C. Butler,

Thomas Corbishley, C. C. Martindale, E. C. Messenger, and Hugh Pope.⁶ In addition to commentaries on individual books of the Bible, this work includes thirty-five articles introducing the Old and New Testaments and examining such topics as the synoptic problem, the various texts and versions of the Bible, proper interpretation, inspiration and inerrancy, and the geography and history of Israel.

In 1969 appeared *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*,⁷ using the Revised Standard Version instead of the Douay-Rheims. About a fifth of the original edition was carried over, as were several of the original contributors. The new edition is superior in some ways (for example, it takes into account real advances in biblical scholarship), but it may not appeal to everyone in other ways.

As a substitute or supplement one should consider *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*,⁸ first published in 1968 and since updated and stocked by most Catholic bookstores. Although this American commentary is not as trustworthy as its British counterparts, it is still worth having, and the orthodox Catholic can skip the more tendentious essays. After all, when it comes to comments on individual books of the Bible, as distinguished from articles giving overviews of the Pentateuch or the life of Christ, there is little room for foolery. In any event, do not be put off by being unable to locate an ideal commentary, since there is no such thing.

Newer than the latest commentaries is William G. Most's *Free from All Error*.⁹ Most, known for his orthodoxy and willingness to engage modernists in verbal combat, examines the authorship, inerrancy, and historicity of Scripture. In this book, which is not a replacement for but a fine addition to a commentary, he devotes separate chapters to Genesis, the infancy narratives, apocalyptic books, and wisdom literature. He examines the historical-critical method of scriptural interpretation, the prejudices of form and redaction critics, and how we determine which books are inspired and belong in the Bible and which are not and do not.

Also worth having are two books by John Steinmueller, the three-volume *Companion to Scripture Studies*¹⁰ and *The Sword of the Spirit*.¹¹ The first volume of the *Companion* discusses inspiration, the canon of the Bible, texts and versions, and hermeneutics. It considers the history of exegesis in the ancient, medieval, and modern periods and biblical antiquities, which include sacred places (such as the temples of Solomon, Zorobabel, and Herod), sacred persons, sacred rituals, and even sacred seasons, and it closes with a

chapter on the geography of the Holy Land.

The second volume covers the Old Testament, while the third covers the New. Each book of the Bible is considered, but not in the manner of a commentary. Steinmueller does not use a verse-by-verse approach. Typically, after giving a bibliography, he presents an outline of a book, then devotes a few paragraphs to its author, origin, intended audience, and special aims. In the third volume each book of the New Testament is given more space than could be given in the second volume to each of the Old, and there is a fine analysis of the synoptic problem and a useful, if unhappily too short, life of Christ.

The Sword of the Spirit covers the meaning, inspiration, authors, and canon of the Bible, biblical theology, the history of the Bible, and conflicting views in modern biblical scholarship. It might be read before turning to a commentary or the more daunting *Companion*. Steinmueller's pages on early English versions of the Bible will be a disappointment to fundamentalists who pick up *The Sword of the Spirit*, most of them having a sense that the King James Version was the first in English (and some of them believing it was in fact the *original* version), because he shows English translations long predated the Reformation. Catholics new to the history of the Bible will benefit from this discussion, although for the full story one needs to turn to Hugh Pope's *English Versions of the Bible*,¹² which examines at greater length than one might think possible all the translations to the twentieth century.

Another handy work is Henri Daniel-Rops' *Daily Life in the Time of Jesus*.¹³ This supplement to the commentaries is an extended and readable examination of the society of first-century Palestine. Discussed are the class structure, personal cleanliness, arts and science, occupations, the Jewish family, the city of Jerusalem, and much more, in a text the cover blurb rightly calls "a masterful synthesis of the complex array of the economic, political, and cultural currents of the pivotal era of human history". It is the kind of book the apologist will want to reach for when his discussions with fundamentalists involve interpreting Scripture in light of its own time.

Fundamentalists do not argue against the Church merely from Scripture, limiting themselves to events of the first century. They also decry later Catholic "inventions" and what they consider to be the universally sorry history of the universal Church. The more knowledgeable among them bring up specific historical points—the Inquisition, the "bad Popes", abuses leading

up to the Reformation—and expect Catholics to be able to explain how such enormities could proceed from the Church Christ established.

There are two problems here. First, most of the ecclesiastical history fundamentalists know is wrong, being little more than vague prejudices mixed with scraps of pseudolearning. Few of them, though, have any reason to doubt that what has been handed down to them (part of their “tradition”, in a way) is the real story of the Catholic Church.

The second problem is that, although some of the history they have is accurate, at least in the bare sense of dates and names, they have no grasp of what that history *means*. Their basic problem, of course, is that their own religion is frozen in apostolic times. They fail to see that the true Faith may alter its appearance, although not its content, as the centuries pass, and that later events can shed light on earlier, just as the New Testament allows a deeper appreciation of the Old; and they forget, it seems, that Christianity, although not *of* the world, is certainly *in* it. From decades of refusing to examine events with a critical mind, their instincts have become antihistorical.

Fundamentalists rightly note that priestly celibacy became mandatory only in the Middle Ages, but they have no feel for the process leading up to the rule and so conclude it was instituted out of the blue. They know Constantine legalized Christianity in 313, and they have been told his Edict of Milan precipitated the rise of the Catholic Church, but they know little of the shape of Christianity in the years immediately preceding or following Constantine’s rule. They envision distinctively Catholic practices, such as auricular confession and the use of Latin, as popping up out of nowhere, and this bothers them no end—as it should, if their historical outlook were true.

The only way to overcome these stumbling blocks—and that is just what so much of Catholicism is when not understood in itself—is for the Catholic apologist to be able to take each historical question and find an answer, putting the issue in context, first showing what really happened, then integrating the facts with what his fundamentalist questioner already knows, thus giving him the broad picture. This can cause endless headaches, of course, and sometimes it is either impossible or not worth trying to accomplish, but often it is crucial.

Most fundamentalists embrace only one or two historical squabbles with gusto, and, if their confusions about them can be cleared up—and it may take very little effort to do that—they will be open to learning about the Faith.

They will then be receptive to talk about the other historical complaints they have, the ones on which they do not stake their reputations. A few fundamentalists have so many questions and know so much that is not so, that one cannot hope to satisfy them, no matter how much homework is done, no matter how many citations are given, no matter how many pages from history texts are photocopied and sent off with explanatory cover letters. A hundred matters can be settled to then grudging satisfaction, but, hydralike, two hundred more will arise. These people can be touched only by grace, not by anything the Catholic apologist can do. They revel in their confusion and would be lost if they did not have a full bag of complaints concerning the history of the Church.

Yet they are a small minority of fundamentalists, most of whom can be approached on the level of history, most of whom would welcome serious historical discussions (which is not to say, by any means, that one needs to be a certified historian to speak with them). To enter such discussions, whether on the lecture platform, in a Bible-study class, or around the cracker barrel, the Catholic needs, in addition to a thick skin, a good grounding in Church history. He does not need to have on the tip of his tongue an answer to every question, although there are a few standard complaints for which he indeed will have set replies. He needs to be able to look up answers in handy reference works, ones that are really useful for his purposes. When he tells a fundamentalist that he will get back with the answer in a few days, he needs to be able to do just that. Not to get back with an answer because one does not have on hand the right books means, to a suspicious interlocutor, that there is no answer to his charge.

Some of the best historical works are no longer in print, such as Newman Eberhardt's *A Summary of Catholic History*,¹⁴ Fernand Mourret's *A History of the Catholic Church*,¹⁵ and Henri Daniel-Rops' *History of the Church of Christ*.¹⁶ An especially promising venture is Warren Carroll's six-volume project titled *A History of Christendom*,¹⁷ At this writing incomplete, the series can be highly recommended as orthodox, temperate, detailed, and accurate. Another fine history is Philip Hughes' *History of the Church*.¹⁸ This three-volume set takes the story to the time of Luther. Hughes was unable to finish the planned fourth volume, but that does not matter much, since most questions fundamentalists have about Catholic history concern matters in the early centuries and in the Middle Ages.

Published concurrently with Hughes' three-volume set was a one-volume

abridgment, *A Popular History of the Catholic Church*.¹⁹ It carries the story to 1946, and, although pre-Reformation topics are handled more concisely than in the larger work, the book gives the reader new to Church history a surprisingly satisfying overview of events. For the first time there is a real connection between the history of the first years of the Church, as found in the New Testament, and the history one has lived through. The first century is tied to the twentieth, the intervening years no longer being a void.

Not to be overlooked is the first major historical work by a Christian, the fourth-century *Ecclesiastical History*²⁰ of Eusebius. Available with Greek and English on facing pages, it will impress on the reader better than any other ancient writing that the Catholic Church and its distinguishing elements existed from the first.

A history book deals mainly with people and actions and not so much with ideas and their development, although that necessarily plays a substantial part in any history of Catholicism. It is hard to trace doctrinal developments, no matter how many straight history texts one has access to. What is needed is an account of the history of beliefs themselves. The premier work of that kind is Joseph Tixeront's *History of Dogmas*,²¹ a three-volume set that is prime reading for the apologist. As John A. Hardon explains on the cover, Tixeront takes the basic truths of the Faith and "analyzes these truths in their historical context from the New Testament through the last of the Fathers in the eighth century. Three crucial concepts are especially demonstrated: (1) that the Catholic faith has remained essentially unchanged since the time of Christ to the present day, (2) that there nevertheless has been a marvelous development of doctrine fulfilling Christ's prophecy, 'when the spirit of truth comes He will lead you to the complete truth' (John 16:13), and (3) that this continuity and development of Christian doctrine has been possible only because of the Roman Catholic Church, of which the Bishop of Rome is the visible head."

An invaluable companion series is Johannes Quasten's *Patrology*.²² This standard reference work, in four volumes, is an introduction to the Christian authors of the early centuries. (Patrology, the study of the Fathers of the Church, of their contemporaries—both orthodox and heterodox—and of the authenticity of the works attributed to them, should be distinguished from patristics, the study of their thought, which is more the kind of thing found in Tixeront's books.) *Patrology* will give the reader a good grasp of how Christian literature developed in the early centuries, and that in turn shows the continuity of the Church and its doctrines.

William A. Jurgens' *The Faith of the Early Fathers*²³ is another three-volume set that covers the same years as does Tixeront's and somewhat more than does Quasten's—that is, from the first century through the eighth. It is a work of remarkable compression and utility and cannot be recommended highly enough.

There are available, for hundreds of dollars, English translations of early Christian literature, not just the writings of the Fathers, but also of other orthodox commentators and of heretics. These shelf-long sets are for libraries and for bookish apologists with fat wallets. Until Jurgens' anthology appeared, there was nothing convenient in size that could be had at a convenient price. The value of *The Faith of the Early Fathers* is not to be found, though, in how much shelf space or how many dollars it saves, but in its doctrinal index, which lets the reader locate at once references to the sorts of issues fundamentalists bring up. There are 2,390 quotations in the three volumes, some a few lines long, some several paragraphs, and they are cross-referenced under 1,046 doctrinal headings, which are organized much like a catechism.

For example, headings 849 through 899 deal with the Eucharist. Headings 849 through 867, which include 88 citations (some of the headings having more than a dozen), are restricted to the topic of the Real Presence, and numbers 868 through 899 cover Communion, the Mass, and liturgy and law. Heading 851, for instance, is the proposition that "Christ is really present in the Eucharist under the appearance of bread and wine". Twenty citations are given. Number 852 is that "the truth of the Real Presence is evident from the words of institution", and for that there are seven citations.

In addition to the doctrinal index there are an index of scriptural references and a detailed alphabetical index. What is more, each writer and his works are introduced in a few well-turned paragraphs. Jurgens includes helpful footnotes, covering all the hard or controverted points, and gives suggestions for further reading.

As a final handbook on doctrines, consider Ludwig Ott's *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*.²⁴ This is a true tome, but one worth obtaining. It is invaluable for the research an apologist promises to do on short notice, and ex-Catholics who are returning to the Faith through a program of good reading have said Ott's work, though intimidating at first sight, is helpful because it presents so much between two covers. Ott discusses the whole of Catholic dogma, and the value of his work lies not just in his precision and

compact explanations, but in his references. How can Catholics claim the Church was established as a visible institution? What is the basis for that? Ott covers the issue, giving references to and quotations from papal encyclicals (somewhat useful, but of course not authoritative in fundamentalists' eyes), the Bible (here is what they want), the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, and Church councils. He also gives heretical views, referring to the theories of the Spiritualist sects of the Middle Ages, to Hus, Calvin, and Luther. So it goes, with every topic.

Ott does not present a complete answer in the form fundamentalists will understand or find convincing, at least not usually, and his is certainly not the first book one would recommend to a fundamentalist beginning to learn about the Faith or to an uninstructed Catholic. But it can put the Catholic apologist on the right track, ensuring he will find all the right biblical references and enough other leads so he can build firm arguments.

Not exactly a handbook on doctrines, but an extended commentary on their growth, is the premier theological work in English, John Henry Newman's *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*.²⁵ While not the first book the apologist will want for his library, it is one he should read early on so he can understand how an examination of the history of doctrines can lead one to the Church. Newman was an Anglican with strong Catholic sympathies when he began writing this book, and as he finished it he converted. One might say he wrote himself into the Church. What his research demonstrated to him was that the Catholic Church, contrary to what he had been brought up to believe, had not added dogmas at random; there were no Catholic "inventions", but maturations of the original deposit of faith.

If one were to select a single book as a guide to the art of apologetics, it would be Frank Sheed's *Catholic Evidence Training Outlines*.²⁶ This marvelous work was used to train members of the Catholic Evidence Guild, which Sheed and his wife, Maisie Ward, guided more than half a century ago. At one time the Guild had six hundred street-corner preachers in England alone. Street-corner preaching, of course, is now passe: anyone talking religion from a soapbox in the park is presumed to be a bit off—and usually is. Besides, the audiences have changed.

In the twenties, thirties, and forties, one could stand up in Hyde Park, announce that papal infallibility was the topic, and be sure of gathering a crowd that included, along with the usual assortment of cranks and habitual hecklers, a large number of intelligent listeners. However popular street-

corner preaching once was in England, its popularity here was never great, and in both places it has nearly disappeared. But no matter. The lessons that Sheed taught his Guild members two generations ago are just the lessons serious Catholic apologists need to learn today, and they can be used effectively in one-on-one talks or in group discussions.

Catholic Evidence Training Outlines went through several editions, rapidly improving with age and experience. The book began as a collection of short lesson plans used in the weekly courses Guild members had to take (and pass, after rigorous tests) before being allowed to speak publicly. Opposite the title page is a boxed warning that “the speakers are again reminded that these are not street-corner outlines but class outlines to prepare them for the street corner”, and that is just what the bulk of the book is.

The first forty pages are devoted to the theory of street-corner apologetics (perfectly applicable still, even if the discussion takes place in the home, on the steps outside of church, or in print, rather than on a lecture platform) and to how Guild training should be organized. Sheed had it down to a science, and it shows in his writing.

Then come two dozen short chapters, if they can be called chapters—the course for junior speakers, people who were allowed to speak on only the basics. Twice as many chapters cover topics for senior speakers. Each chapter consists of a narrowly drawn topic, the key points schematically described; recommended readings; and true-to-life sample questions. The student who could not answer each question with aplomb (and they are tough) could not graduate from one subject to the next. It was common to find hundreds of Guild members who were allowed to talk on only a handful of topics. It took years of regular training to become a senior speaker or, higher still, a chairman, the person who acted as moderator on the platform and who was considered competent to handle any question the audience might pose.

As a rule, several people would speak, taking turns. A senior speaker might start off, to get the crowd warmed up. Then a junior speaker or two would give ten-minute talks on some of the basics of the Faith. Then, perhaps, another senior speaker would have as his topic a particularly sticky or confusing issue, such as the Inquisition or the Mystical Body of Christ. Questions could come from the crowd at any time, and heckling was common. It was the chairman’s job to get the speakers up and (just as important) down in a timely manner, and he would take over if a speaker was getting in over his head or was losing control of the crowd.

All in all, it was a thorough, militarylike system, one that worked remarkably well in bringing converts to the Church and in developing the faith of the Catholics who participated. The scheme of operation can be appreciated by reading the nine “technical lectures” that are sandwiched between the junior and senior courses. They are on such things as “Relating to the Mind of the Listeners”, “How to Handle a Crowd”, and dealing with “Questions and Interjections”. At the end of the book, in addition to an appendix comprised of six specialized lectures, is a general survey of key points.²⁷

If *Catholic Evidence Training Outlines* is the best source book to have, a good runner-up, and one that is easily obtained, is *Radio Replies*,²⁸ Leslie Rumble and Charles M. Carty’s three-volume set. The books contain 4,374 questions posed to the “Radio Priests” during their many years on the air in the United States and Australia. The questions are tough because they are authentic. Rumble and Carty took the questions as they were sent in and prepared complete, readable, and pointed responses. Virtually every question a fundamentalist could ask will be found in *Radio Replies*. What is more, virtually every question a nonreligious skeptic or a confused Catholic could ask will be found there.

True, these books are old, the last appearing in 1942, but it is uncanny how useful they are now. Only a handful of the hundreds of topics considered are truly dated, and of course some of the terminology has changed. Those are minor points. Anyone not prejudiced against what was written the day before yesterday will profit immensely from *Radio Replies*. These might well be the most-thumbed books on an apologist’s shelf, the ones he turns to first when he promises to find an answer to a question that is puzzling a prospective convert to (or from) Catholicism.

Fulton Sheen began his preface to *Radio Replies* by noting that “there are not over a hundred people in the United States who hate the Catholic Church. There are millions, however, who hate what they wrongly believe to be the Catholic Church—which is quite a different thing. . . . If, then, the hatred of the Church is founded on erroneous beliefs, it follows that [the] basic need of the day is instruction.”²⁹ And *Radio Replies* is certainly a gem of an instructional aid. Sometimes Rumble and Carty cover a topic completely, giving the reader far more than he needs to satisfy his curiosity. At other times they give, if not a full treatment, at least enough that the reader knows where to look for detailed information.

There are other works by Frank Sheed that deserve mention, because he probably had a firmer grasp of practical apologetics than any other recent Catholic writer. His *Theology and Sanity*³⁰ was originally published in 1946; the revised paperback edition features a fascinating preface in which Sheed gives some history of his street-corner apostolate and pokes fun at people who siphon the reality out of the Resurrection and Ascension, “leaving for our nourishment only the spiritual meaning of incidents all the truer for never having happened!” He explains:

When I wrote *Theology and Sanity*, I had been teaching the Faith under the open sky for a quarter of a century. . . . Every paragraph had been tried out on forty or fifty outdoor audiences before I got it down on paper. Listeners were free to walk away the moment they were bored—I tried to learn from their boredom. If they stayed, they could utter their reactions—anything from agreement to intelligent criticism to mockery to blasphemy—with a freedom which speakers who knew only the ivory tower of pulpit or lecture hall found unnerving. It was unbelievably educative. I doubt if there was any objection against the Faith in all the centuries that was not hurled at us. And, unlike the great theologians whose writings had helped to form our minds, we could not go off and think about the objection for a year or two, then write an article. We had to cope—somehow—there and then. The crowd was truly co-author of the book; not a sentence that has not been reshaped by them. This really is *aggiornamento*—doctrines restated, not to be made more acceptable but more comprehensible, related to the questions people were actually asking, to the needs they were actually feeling, in the language they actually spoke.³¹

This book presents to the reader a fully rounded and accurate representation of the Catholic view of reality, a view remarkably unlike that held by fundamentalists. Even most Catholics have a weak appreciation of it, and it is something that needs to be well comprehended by anyone wanting to pass along the Faith. The title *Theology and Sanity* comes from Sheed’s notion that to be truly sane is to take into account the whole of reality as it really is. To disbelieve in the supernatural (as even many Catholics, *in practice*, seem to do), is to live other than sanely, much as a physician who disbelieves in bacteria lives other than sanely.

Sheed begins with a fine explanation of the Trinity, which is usually thought of as a dry topic but which his outdoor crowds found the most captivating. The next section looks at angels and men, the Fall, the Redemption, and the Mystical Body of Christ, and it gives perhaps the best popular account of life after death to be found anywhere. The last section explains why we need to be habituated to reality, how our insufficiencies are made up for by the sufficiencies of the Church, and how “sanity points toward sanctity”.³²

It is not enough to have the Faith firmly in hand and to be able to answer questions with, a glib tongue. There is a tendency for religion to seem dry, Scholastic in the bad sense. This is easily overcome if one has a deep appreciation of the life of Christ. The New Testament, of course, is the place to turn, but reading it alone is insufficient unless one is graced with considerable powers of synthesis. Help is needed to see the larger picture, and there are several books that do a fine job in that.

Again, one is by Sheed. It is *To Know Christ Jesus*.³³ The opening line of the foreword says, “This book is not a Life of Christ.” Sheed means there is too much we do not know about Jesus, at least regarding his everyday activities (we know, for instance, only one event between his infancy and the start of his ministry), for this to be a regular biography. What Sheed proposes to do, and what he does admirably, is introduce us to Someone through the Gospels. His book is really a preparation for reading the Gospels. Things are put in the right sequence, in the right perspective, and then, when one turns back to the sacred writings, there is a new and deeper understanding. The Gospels are in many ways so haphazard in organization, so confusing in terminology, that we need a road map to get around them and to know what we have seen. It is a bit like visiting a large city. You can drive around all day and still have no feel for it; but study a map, see where the main buildings are and how the highways intersect, and you can get back in the car and, for the first time, really appreciate what is there.

Similar to Sheed’s book is Fulton Sheen’s *Life of Christ*,³⁴ his most famous work. Written in response to an unnamed trial that afflicted him for years, it centers on what struck him as the main point of Christ’s life, that Christ did not come into the world to live but to die. “Unless there is a Good Friday in our lives there will never be an Easter Sunday. The Cross is the condition of the empty tomb, and the crown of thorns is the preface to the halo of light.”³⁵ Sheen takes the reader through our Lord’s life chronologically, as might be expected, and he punctuates his recounting of what we think should be a familiar tale with astonishing insights. This book is every bit as good as Sheed’s in giving the prospective apologist the indispensable overview.

Not to be overlooked is Romano Guardini’s *The Lord*,³⁶ which may be the epitome of the genre. Guardini begins by noting that neither a psychology nor a biography of Jesus is possible;—the divine is not to be comprehended by finite minds.

All we can do is ponder such words as: “And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and grace before God and men” (Luke 2:52), or the passage in the Epistle to the Galatians which describes him as one “in the fullness of time,” ripening to maturity deeply conscious of the history about him. . . . We can only reverently pause before this or that word or act, ready to learn, adore, obey.

Guardini offers “the spiritual commentaries of some four years of Sunday services undertaken with the sole purpose of obeying as well as possible the Lord’s command to proclaim him, his message, and his works”.³⁷ It is generally agreed that Guardini fulfilled his task well.

Gathering the books mentioned in this chapter will be neither convenient nor inexpensive. While only someone wanting to go into apologetics on a more or less formal basis (or a bookworm) will acquire all the books, any Catholic who wants to develop his own faith so he can speak effectively with fundamentalists will get most of them. The fundamentalist problem is not a small one, and the problems fundamentalists have with Catholicism are not few. There is no one book that will arm Catholics adequately for the task, and it will take months to read what *must* be read. But the homework needs to be done—for oneself, for one’s family and friends who might be tempted toward fundamentalism, and for fundamentalists, both ex-Catholic and never-Catholic, who are thinking of coming home to Rome or who, if they find their questions answered, might start thinking that way.

Chapter 26

Afterword

“There is something very gallant about these Literalists”, wrote Hilaire Belloc nearly a lifetime ago. The people known today as fundamentalists

never retreated, they never surrendered, they were incapable of maneuver, and the few that remain will die where they stand rather give way a foot. Their simplicity sometimes has a holy quality about it. . . . Most of us, asked to make a guess, would say that in fifty years no odd Literalist could still be found crawling on the earth. Do not be too sure. Our children may live to see a revival of this type in some strange land.¹

Writing only five years after the Scopes Trial, Belloc naturally emphasized fundamentalism’s attitude toward the first eleven chapters of Genesis. Perhaps that was all he knew about this brand of Christianity. Besides, it was mainly an American phenomenon, and the real battles were being fought elsewhere. Still, he perceived fundamentalists’ tenacity. Whatever they stood for, they stood for it solidly, and he was right to imagine a revival of fundamentalism “in some strange land”, such as the one across the Atlantic from England. He had no way of knowing, of course, of the travails the Catholic Church would undergo during the next half century. He could not imagine a resurgence of modernism, which seemed quite dead in 1930, or how, in two generations, Catholics would be woefully uninstructed in their religion, easy marks for sects that offered simple answers for the spiritual problems of an age that had ceased to be Christian in any real sense. He could not know of the hollowness so many Catholics would feel—good people who one day woke to realize that their bonds to the Church were tenuous and that they might happily go wherever the Bible, as interpreted by fundamentalists, seemed to lead them.

Someone who understands all this is Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger. The Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has said that

[o]ur catechesis . . . must unmask the point on which these new “missionaries” harp: the impression, namely, that Scripture is to be read in a “literal” sense, while Catholics assertedly have weakened or forgotten it. This *literalness* often signifies a betrayal of *fidelity*. The isolation

of single sentences and verses is misleading and loses sight of the whole. Read as a whole, the Bible is really “Catholic”, But this must first be shown through a catechetical instruction that would rehabilitate the faithful to a reading of sacred Scripture in and with the Church.²

The key, then, is instruction—and not just in the proper approach to the Bible, but to all aspects of the Faith. Almost without exception, Catholics returning to the Church from fundamentalism report they never would have left had they been well catechized. Had they known what the Catholic religion really was, they would have been able to deal with awkward questions thrown their way. Fundamentalist neighborliness, however freely accepted, would not have resulted in the acceptance of fundamentalist doctrines.

Many Catholics think people are attracted to fundamentalism only for social and emotional reasons; since such suasions cannot be overcome by syllogisms, they see no point in discussing doctrines. Catholics who have returned to the Church from fundamentalism put the emphasis differently. They admit that frustration with the Church and its officials and members may have played a part in their conversion to fundamentalism, and they acknowledge that personal problems, such as loneliness, may have made fundamentalism (or at least fundamentalists) look attractive at the beginning. Yet they almost universally declare that what kept them out of the Catholic Church was doctrine. Whatever their initial reasons for examining fundamentalism, they stayed away from Catholicism because they decided its teachings were untrue.

They also reconverted for doctrinal reasons. They came to understand that fundamentalism contains much religious truth, but also much error, and the fullness of religious truth, they learned, can only be found at Rome. They came to believe in the Catholic religion again because someone took the time to tell them what the Church really stands for or because, fortuitously, they stumbled on the facts for themselves.

The committed fundamentalist, who is often a former Catholic, *knows* the Catholic religion is wrong and thinks he can prove it from the Bible. The first step is to demonstrate to him that much of what he knows simply is not so. Emotional barriers will be overcome later, and they will fall as he realizes he has not been told the whole story. Glad-handing alone will not suffice; in fact, it is often counterproductive. The fundamentalist *wants* Catholics to discuss doctrines, and when they do not—when they deliberately shy away from even trying—he concludes their doctrinal beliefs are groundless, and the

indictment against Rome seems rock solid.

Although it is essential to treat fundamentalists with respect and love (especially difficult for those too quick with jabs, whether verbal or pugilistic), that is hardly sufficient and will resolve no confusions and produce no converts. Fundamentalists must be approached on the level of doctrine, which means making biblical (but also historical and other) arguments. It has been on the level of doctrine that the fundamentalist challenge to the Church has found its power. This power lies not in the objective truth of the fundamentalist position, which is a mixture of truth and error, but in fundamentalism's insistence that truth really matters, that one's salvation depends on accepting God's truth in its entirety, in all its consequences. People find this intellectually challenging and immensely attractive—and not just attractive, but compelling, for who says A must say B.

If Catholics expect to answer fundamentalism, they will have to answer it not just with charity—necessary, although hardly sufficient—but with doctrine. They will have to appeal not just to the heart but to the intellect. After all, it is the truth that sets us free.

Appendix

Materials explaining and defending Catholic beliefs, history, and practices may be obtained from Catholic Answers, Inc., a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization run by Catholic laymen. Its director is the author of this book. Available are a monthly publication titled *Catholic Answers*, tracts (in English or Spanish) on a wide variety of topics, and audiocassette tapes of debates and lectures. Write for a catalogue, sending a self-addressed, stamped envelope to:

Catholic Answers

P. O. Box 17181

San Diego, California 92117

Anti-Catholic literature may be obtained on request or for a small donation from the following organizations. When writing, ask for a catalogue and samples of literature.

1. Chick Publications
P. O. Box 662
Chino, California 91710
2. Christians Evangelizing Catholics
P.O. Box 24758
San Jose, California 95154
3. The Conversion Center
Drawer V
Havertown, Pennsylvania 19083
4. Mission to Catholics International
P. O. Box 19280

San Diego, California 92119

5. Radio Bible Class

Grand Rapids, Michigan 49555-0001

6. Jimmy Swaggart Ministries

P. O. Box 2550

Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70821-2550

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_____ and Arnold Lunn, *Difficulties* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1952).

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NOTES

CHAPTER 1

¹ Standard works on fundamentalism include James Barr, *Fundamentalism* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977); Gabriel Hebert, *Fundamentalism and the Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1957); George Marsden, ed., *Evangelicalism and Modern America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984); Jerry Falwell, *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon* (New York: Doubleday, 1981); Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970). [Back to Text.](#)

² See p. 19, below. [Back to Text.](#)

³ Many “professional anti-Catholics” converted from Catholicism, a fact that leads some critics of fundamentalism to conclude, wrongly, that anti-Catholicism is a manifestation not of doctrinal differences, but of emotional traumas in the converted. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Fundamentalism is restricted mainly to English-speaking countries but it is spreading rapidly elsewhere. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Hebert, *Fundamentalism*, 17. [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ Hebert, *Fundamentalism*, 17. [Back to Text.](#)

⁷ Hebert, *Fundamentalism*, 19. [Back to Text.](#)

⁸ Hebert, *Fundamentalism*, 17. [Back to Text.](#)

⁹ Edward Dobson, “Fundamentalism—Its Roots”, *New Catholic World*, January / February 1985, 5. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁰ Dobson, “Fundamentalism”, 9. [Back to Text.](#)

¹¹ Hebert, *Fundamentalism*, 9. [Back to Text.](#)

¹² Dobson, “Fundamentalism”, 7. [Back to Text.](#)

¹³ As an example of the Catholic apologetic, see Arnold Lunn, *The Third Day* (London: Burns Oates, 1945). [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁴ A. C. Dixon et al., eds., *The Fundamentals* (Los Angeles: Bible Institute of Los Angeles, 1909), 2:239. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁵ There are innumerable variations on the theme, with many

fundamentalists coming close to mimicking William Miller both in his penchant for setting dates for the Second Coming (he guessed 1843, later 1844) and in his accuracy as a prognosticator. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁶ Some fundamentalists read others right out of Christianity for occasionally throwing the dice or bending the arm, although the Bible nowhere condemns gambling with one's superfluous wealth or drinking spirits in moderation. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁷ Peggy L. Shriver, "Guardians of Fundamentalism's Fortress", *New Catholic World*, January/February 1985, 15. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁸ Loraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1962), 13-18. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 2

¹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, x. [Back to Text.](#)

² Boettner, *Catholicism*, 118. [Back to Text.](#)

³ The books by Catholics include James Gibbons, *Faith of Our Fathers* (Baltimore: John Murphy, 1876); John A. O'Brien, *The Faith of Millions* (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, 1938); John A. Ryan and Francis J. Boland, *Catholic Principles of Politics* (New York: Macmillan, 1949); Philip Hughes, *A Popular History of the Catholic Church* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1949); Glenn D. Kittler, *The Papal Princes* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1960); Martin J. Scott, *Things Catholics Are Asked About* (New York: Kenedy, 1927); Fulton J. Sheen, *Peace of Soul* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1940). [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Most works that present the Catholic Faith accurately do not anticipate fundamentalist attacks and so hardly can be faulted for not answering questions they were not intended to answer. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 127. Hughes is quoted as saying that Gregory the Great "is the founder of the papal monarchy", and Boettner says Hughes is admitting that Gregory was the first Pope, which is the standard fundamentalist position. Actually, Hughes is referring to the establishment of the papal political monarchy, not to the establishment of the papacy—something clear if the few sentences quoted from him are read in context. [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ Some of his books, such as *The Priest, the Woman, and the Confessional*, seem never to have gone out of print. There is always a

market for the lurid. [Back to Text.](#)

⁷ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 244-45. [Back to Text.](#)

⁸ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Strossmayer, Joseph Georg”, 14:316. [Back to Text.](#)

⁹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 235. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁰ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 235. [Back to Text.](#)

¹¹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 88. [Back to Text.](#)

¹² Boettner, *Catholicism*, 88. [Back to Text.](#)

¹³ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 7-9. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁴ The ellipses appear in Boettner’s list of “inventions”. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁵ Tertullian, *De corona* 3,2. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁶ The first theologian of note to oppose the doctrine of transubstantiation was Berengarius of Tours (c. 1000-1088), [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁷ Origen, *In Leviticum homiliae* 2, 4. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁸ Cyprian, *De lapsis* 28. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁹ Aphraates, *Demonstrationes* 7,3. [Back to Text.](#)

²⁰ James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson* (Everyman’s Library), 1:376. [Back to Text.](#)

²¹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 185. [Back to Text.](#)

²² Boettner, *Catholicism*, 189. [Back to Text.](#)

²³ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 136. [Back to Text.](#)

²⁴ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 302. [Back to Text.](#)

²⁵ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 53. [Back to Text.](#)

²⁶ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 176. [Back to Text.](#)

²⁷ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 163. [Back to Text.](#)

²⁸ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 151. [Back to Text.](#)

²⁹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 184. [Back to Text.](#)

³⁰ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 59. [Back to Text.](#)

³¹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 215. [Back to Text.](#)

³² Boettner, *Catholicism*, 323. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 3

¹ The pastor of the church told a visitor, “We bought this place from the jews at a good price”, beating them at their own game, he apparently

thought. [Back to Text.](#)

² The books include titles by Avro Manhattan, an inveterate anti-Catholic and author of *The Vatican-Moscow-Washington Alliance*, *The Vatican Billions*, *Catholic Power Today*, *Murder in the Vatican*, and *Vatican Imperialism in the 20th Century*. [Back to Text.](#)

³ The last year for which Mission to Catholics International published figures was 1979. In its January 1980 newsletter, it reported that during the previous year more than 250,000 books, tracts, and tapes were distributed. At that time most of the organization's work was restricted to the seven westernmost states. It has since expanded throughout the continental United States and into Europe. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Although leaders of anti-Catholic groups regularly deny any advocacy of trespassing, harassment, or vandalism, their rhetoric is so strident that their more zealous followers draw the necessary inferences. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Bartholomew F. Brewer, *Pilgrimage from Rome* (Greenville, S.C.: Boh Jones University Press, 1982). [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ In a tract titled *The Conversion of a Catholic Priest*. [Back to Text.](#)

⁷ Bernard Berenson, *Rumor and Reflection* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1952), 43. [Back to Text.](#)

⁸ C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* (Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 1949), 56. [Back to Text.](#)

⁹ *Challenger* (San Diego: Mission to Catholics International), June 1983. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁰ Given in conferences at a retreat for the priests of the Archdiocese of Washington in 1974. [Back to Text.](#)

¹¹ *Challenger*, April 1985. [Back to Text.](#)

¹² *Challenger*, February 1985. [Back to Text.](#)

¹³ Complaints from Catholics are printed occasionally, most of them badly reasoned or entirely unreasoned; they serve as useful straw men. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁴ Including a talk, appropriately enough, in West Babylon, New York. *Challenger*, March 1985. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁵ When a verse's plain or primary sense argues in favor of the Catholic position, anti-Catholics ignore that sense and base their attack on a less-likely sense, often not admitting that their case is not open and shut. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁶ Frank Sheed and Maisie ward, *Catholic Evidence Training Outlines*, 4th ed. (London: Sheed and Ward, 1948), 232. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 4

¹ One naturally would like to see how local newspapers characterized the incident. [Back to Text.](#)

² The passage actually reads this way: “The spirit of old Rome has risen again in its former place, and has evidenced its identity by its works. It has possessed the Church there planted, as an evil spirit might seize the demoniacs of primitive times, and makes her speak words which are not her own. In the corrupt Papal system we have the very cruelty, the craft, and the ambition of the Republic; its cruelty in its unsparing sacrifice of the happiness and virtue of individuals to a phantom of public expediency, in its forced celibacy within, and its persecutions without; its craft in its falsehoods, its deceitful deeds and lying wonders; and its grasping ambition in the very structure of its polity, in its assumption of universal dominion: old Rome is still alive; no where have its eagles lighted, but it still claims the sovereignty under another pretence. The Roman Church I will not blame, but pity—she is, as I have said, spellbound, as if by an evil spirit; she is in thralldom.” John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1974), 60. [Back to Text.](#)

³ The disinclination of the Conversion Center to locate more recent photographs parallels its disinclination to discover what the Catholic Church really believes. It is more convenient to use photographs on hand, as it is more convenient to use anti-Catholic arguments handed down from father to son. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ The great advantage possessed by anti-Catholics is that so few of their targets have the stamina to compose the necessary replies, and thus many charges go unanswered. The claims made about the papacy will be answered in later chapters of this book. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ T. S. Eliot, “Choruses from ‘The Rock’ ”, *The Complete Poems and Plays 1909—1950* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1971), 108. [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ Hilaire Belloc, “Heroic Poem in Praise of Wine”, *Complete Verse*, ed. W. N. Roughead (London: Duckworth, 1970), 80. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 5

¹ January 1985 issue. [Back to Text.](#)

² November 1984 issue. [Back to Text.](#)

³ *Pro (Eternal) Life*, [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Ironically, many ex-fundamentalists depict fundamentalism as a cult, complete with “brainwashing”, but it is difficult to locate ex-Catholics who consider Catholicism a cult in the same sense. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Even John Foxe, author of the decidedly anti-Catholic *Book of Martyrs* (1563), denied this. He wrote, “If histories be well examined we shall find both before the Conquest and after, as well before John Wickliffe was born as since, the whole body of the Scriptures was by sundry men translated into our country tongue.” Hugh Pope, *English Versions of the Bible* (St. Louis: Herder, 1952), 63. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 6

¹ Jimmy Swaggart, “Startling Incidents and Amazing Answers to Prayer”, *The Evangelist*, July 1985, 45. [Back to Text.](#)

² Swaggart is also a singer and claims that his income comes strictly from record sales. [Back to Text.](#)

³ Jerry Falweil reports that thirty percent of *his* support comes from Catholics, but Swaggart’s is probably less. Falweil projects a more refined, urban image—most Catholics in America have urban backgrounds, not rural—and does not collapse into anti-Catholicism the way Swaggart does. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Jimmy Swaggart, *Catholicism & Christianity* (Baton Rouge: Jimmy Swaggart Ministries, 1986). [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Although many fundamentalists study Greek, in order to read the New Testament in the language of its composition, leading anti-Catholics are, as a rule, remarkably deficient in Greek and often base their arguments on elementary misunderstandings of the language. [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ John Evangelist Walsh, *The Bones of St. Peter* (Garden City, N.Y.: Double-day, 1982). [Back to Text.](#)

⁷ William A. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1970). [Back to Text.](#)

⁸ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, viii. [Back to Text.](#)

- ⁹ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 206. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁰ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 103. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹¹ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 12. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹² Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 60. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹³ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 61. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁴ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 64. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁵ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 83. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁶ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 88. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁷ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 159-163. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁸ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 200. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁹ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 221, One such book is Peter M. J. Stravinskis, *The Catholic Response* (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, 1985), which Swaggart lists as a newspaper article. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²⁰ One such page citation is to Newman, *Essay*, which is called in the text *The Development of the Christian Religion*. Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 164. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²¹ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 36. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²² Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 200. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²³ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 53-54. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²⁴ Barbara Nauer, "Catholic Calls Swaggart 'Holy Scourge' ", *Baton Rouge Morning Advocate*, 15 February 1985, 10A. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 7

- ¹ Last Days Ministries sends to inquirers a statement issued by Melody Green, Keith Green's widow. She explains the *Catholic Chronicles* have been withdrawn from distribution because "[w]e are aware of Catholics who have been wounded by these tracts. We are also aware of others who have adopted a critical, self-righteous attitude toward Catholics." [Back to Text.](#)
- ² Whittaker Chambers, *Witness* (New York: Random House, 1952), 14. [Back to Text.](#)
- ³ *Lumen Gentium*, 8. [Back to Text.](#)
- ⁴ Boettner, *Catholicism*, xii. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 8

¹ Jack Chick, *Smokescreens* (Chino, Calif.: Chick Publications, 1983), 5. [Back to Text.](#)

² Gary Metz, “Jack Chick’s Anti-Catholic Comic Book Is Exposed as a Fraud”, *Christianity Today*, 13 March 1981. [Back to Text.](#)

³ Information on Rivera is available from the Catholic League, 1100 West Wells Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53233. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Chick, *Smokescreens*, 4-5. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Chick, *Smokescreens*, 64. [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ Tony Alamo, going Chick and Rivera one better, claims the Vatican controls all the major news media. [Back to Text.](#)

⁷ Chick, *Smokescreens*, 76-79. [Back to Text.](#)

⁸ Chick, *Smokescreens*, 88. [Back to Text.](#)

⁹ Chick, *Smokescreens*, 92. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 9

¹ See Paul Cardinal Taguchi, “The Study of Sacred Scripture”, reprinted in John Steinmueller, *The Sword of the Spirit* (Waco, Tex.: Stella Maris, 1978), 87-108. [Back to Text.](#)

² Curiously enough, so do exegetes of the historico-critical school, many of whom refuse to consider evidence extrinsic to the Bible when developing their theories. [Back to Text.](#)

³ Ronald Knox, *In Soft Garments* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1942), 138. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Quoted in Lunn, *Third Day*, 28. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Arnold Lunn and C. E. M. Joad, *Is Christianity True?* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1933), 33-34. [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ See John Henry Newman’s discussion of this point in his *Discussions and Arguments on Various Subjects* (London, 1891), 366. [Back to Text.](#)

⁷ John Henry Newman, *On the Inspiration of Scripture*, ed. J. Derek Holmes and Robert Murray (Washington: Corpus Books, 1967), in. [Back to Text.](#)

⁸ Newman, *Inspiration*, 10-11, [Back to Text.](#)

⁹ Newman, *Inspiration*, 51. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁰ Ronald Knox and Arnold Lunn, *Difficulties* (London: Eyre &

Spottiswoode, 1952), 109. [Back to Text.](#)

¹¹ Amy Wallace, David Wallechinsky, and Irving Wallace, *People's Almanac* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1975), 1339. [Back to Text.](#)

¹² William G. Most, *Free from All Error* (Libertyville, 111.: Franciscan Marytown Press, 1985), 9-11. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 10

¹ *Dei Verbum*, 9. [Back to Text.](#)

² Newman, *Inspiration*, 131n. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 11

¹ Gregory I (the Great), *In Ezechielem homiliae* 2, 4, 12. [Back to Text.](#)

² This refers to general revelation, which is to be believed by all. Private revelations have been given since apostolic times—Fatima is a modern example—but belief in particular private revelations is not necessary for salvation and is not incumbent on the faithful. [Back to Text.](#)

³ Vincent of Lerins, *Commonitoria* 23, 28. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ *Dei verbum*, 8. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* II, 1, 7. [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolyatm*, 2, 15. [Back to Text.](#)

⁷ The Semi-Arians having argued there was no important distinction between the two terms, which differ in spelling by only the smallest Greek letter, we have had preserved for us the saying that “there isn’t an iota of difference” between two closely related things. In fact, the distinction between *homoousios* and *homoiousios* was crucial. [Back to Text.](#)

⁸ Bill Jackson, *A Christian's Guide to Roman Catholicism* (Manteca, Calif.: Christians Evangelizing Catholics, n.d.), sec. 88. [Back to Text.](#)

⁹ Joseph Tixeront, *History of Dogmas* (Westminster, Md.: Christian Classics, 1984), 1:7. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁰ Frank Sheed, *Theology and Sanity* (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, 1978), 12. [Back to Text.](#)

¹¹ From his tract *What about Christmas?* [Back to Text.](#)

¹² Newman, *Essay*, 369, Few fundamentalists complain that the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles coincided with a Canaanite vintage festival, much as Christmas did with the festival of Sol Invictus. Consistency has never been

fundamentalism's strong suit. [Back to Text.](#)

¹³ From the March / April 1985 issue of *The Trinity Review*, the newsletter of the Trinity Foundation. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁴ Newman, *Essay*, 27-28. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 12

¹ Newman, *Essay*, 369. [Back to Text.](#)

² Boettner, *Catholicism*, 11. [Back to Text.](#)

³ Ralph Woodrow, *Babylon Mystery Religion* (Riverside, Calif.: Ralph Woodrow Evangelistic Association, 1966), 44. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Woodrow, *Babylon*, 130. Woodrow forgets that Scripture uses the sun image for the Lord: "But unto you that fear my name, the Sun of justice shall arise, and health in his wings: and you shall go forth, and shall leap like calves of the herd. And you shall trample down the wicked when they shall be ashes under the sole of your feet in the day that I do this, saith the Lord of hosts" (Malachi 3:20-21). [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Woodrow, *Babylon*, 130-131. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 13

¹ Kenneth E. Hagin, *The New Birth* (Tulsa, Okla.: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, 1983), 2-3. [Back to Text.](#)

² This seems to hold true for prisoners. Catholic inmates report that many of their fellows are attracted to fundamentalism because the "born-again" experience lets them avoid atoning for their sins. [Back to Text.](#)

³ Distributed by the Bible Baptist Church of Nashua, New Hampshire. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Ronald Knox, *St. Paul's Gospel* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1950), 60. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ *Can Anyone Really Know for Sure?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Radio Bible Class, 1985), 4, 20-21. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 14

¹ Origen, *Commentarii in Romanes* 5, 9. [Back to Text.](#)

² John Chrysostom, *Catechises ad illuminandos* Apud Aug., Contra Iul. 1, 6, 21. [Back to Text.](#)

- ³ Cyprian, *Epistulae* 64 (59), 2, [Back to Text](#).

CHAPTER 15

¹ This was one of only two times we are told that God breathed on man, the other being when he made man a living soul (Gen 2:7). It emphasizes how important the establishment of the sacrament of penance was. [Back to Text](#).

² Boettner, *Catholicism*, 8. [Back to Text](#).

³ Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 1, 13, 5. [Back to Text](#).

⁴ Origen, *In Psalmos homiliae* 2, 6. [Back to Text](#).

⁵ Cyprian, *De lapsis* 28. [Back to Text](#).

⁶ Aphraates, *Demonstrationes* 7, 3. [Back to Text](#).

⁷ Cyprian, *De lapsis* 28. [Back to Text](#).

⁸ Ambrose, *De paenitentia* 1, 2, 7. [Back to Text](#).

⁹ Leo I (the Great), *Epistulae* 108, 3. [Back to Text](#).

¹⁰ *The Forgiveness of Sins*, [Back to Text](#).

CHAPTER 16

¹ Boswell, *Johnson*, 1:376-77. [Back to Text](#).

² Augustine, *Decivitate Dei* 21, 13. [Back to Text](#).

³ Fundamentalists do not accept the inspiration of 2 Maccabees, of course, but they must admit it reflects the religious views of Jews shortly before New Testament times. [Back to Text](#).

⁴ Sandy Carson, "Is Purgatory Real?" *The Evangelist*, July 1984, 33. [Back to Text](#).

⁵ See the footnote to Colossians 1:24 in Knox's translation of the New Testament. [Back to Text](#).

CHAPTER 17

¹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 117. [Back to Text](#).

² Eusebius Pamphilius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 2, 15, 4. [Back to Text](#).

³ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 120. [Back to Text](#).

⁴ William A. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1970), 421. [Back to Text](#).

- ⁵ Fragment in Eusebius Pamphilius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 2, 25, 8. [Back to Text.](#)
- ⁶ Tertullian, *De praescriptione haereticorum* 36, 1. [Back to Text.](#)
- ⁷ Tertullian, *De praescriptione haereticorum*, 32, 2. [Back to Text.](#)
- ⁸ John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 327-47 passim. [Back to Text.](#)
- ⁹ Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistula ad Romanes* 4, 3. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁰ Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 3, 3, 3. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹¹ Fragment in Eusebius Pamphilius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 6, 14, 1. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹² Peter of Alexandria, *Depaenkenia* canon 9, [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹³ Lactantius, *De mortibus penecutorum* 2, 5. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁴ Eusebius Pamphilius, *Chronican* ad an. Dom. 4.2, ad an. Dom. 68. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁵ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 118. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁶ Walsh, *Bones*. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁷ For an account of the locale, see Stanley L. Jaki, *And on This Rock* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Ave Maria, 1978), 21-55 passim. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁸ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 106. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 106. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²⁰ Papias, *De expositione oracularum Dominicomm*, fragment in Eusebius Pamphilius, *Historia ecclesiastics* 3, 39, 14. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²¹ G. K. Chesterton, *Heretics* (London: Bodiey Head, 1910), 67. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²² Henry T. Hudson, *Papal Power* (Welwyn, England: Evangelical, 1981). [Back to Text.](#)
- ²³ Hudson, *Power*, 2, [Back to Text.](#)
- ²⁴ Hudson, *Power*, 21, n. 2. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²⁵ Hudson, *Power*, 21, n. 3. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 18

- ¹ *Lumen Gentium*, 25. [Back to Text.](#)
- ² Cited in Leslie Rumble and Charles M. Carty, *Radio Replies* (Rockford, 111.: TAN Books, 1979), 3:95. [Back to Text.](#)
- ³ Cyprian, *Epistulae* 59 (55), 14. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Augustine, *Sermones* 131, 10. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Rumble and Carty, *Replies*, 3:96. [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ An example would be Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae vitae*. The encyclical may not have met the requirements of Vatican I, but the doctrine it enunciated is nevertheless infallibly taught. An infallible doctrine can be repeated in a document that is not itself infallible. [Back to Text.](#)

⁷ Joseph Zacchello, *Secrets of Romanism* (Neptune, N.J.: Loizeaux Brothers, 1948), 10-11. There never were three Popes at once, of course. The problem was determining which of three claimants was the real Pope. [Back to Text.](#)

⁸ Woodrow, *Babylon*, 100. [Back to Text.](#)

⁹ Woodrow, *Babylon*, 101. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁰ Woodrow, *Babylon*, 102. [Back to Text.](#)

¹¹ Woodrow, *Babylon*, 102-3. [Back to Text.](#)

¹² Martin Luther's name, when written in Latin, also tallies 666, as do hundreds of other names. [Back to Text.](#)

¹³ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 233. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁴ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 236. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁵ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 238. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁶ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 236. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁷ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 241. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁸ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 239. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 243. [Back to Text.](#)

²⁰ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 248. [Back to Text.](#)

²¹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 250. [Back to Text.](#)

²² Boettner, *Catholicism*, 248. [Back to Text.](#)

²³ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 248. [Back to Text.](#)

²⁴ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 249. [Back to Text.](#)

²⁵ Ronald Knox and Arnold Lunn, *Difficulties* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1952), 126-27. [Back to Text.](#)

²⁶ Knox, *Difficulties*, 127. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 19

¹ Hugh Pope, *The Layman's New Testament* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1934), 333. [Back to Text.](#)

- ² Jimmy Swaggart, “The Mass—The Holy Eucharist”, *The Evangelist*, October 1985, 35. [Back to Text.](#)
- ³ From his tracts *The Roman Catholic Sacrifice of the Mass* and *The Mystery of the Eucharist*. [Back to Text.](#)
- ⁴ Brewer, *Sacrifice and Mystery*, [Back to Text.](#)
- ⁵ From his tract *Transubstantiation*. [Back to Text.](#)
- ⁶ Rumble and Carty, *Replies*, 186. [Back to Text.](#)
- ⁷ Swaggart, “Mass”, 38. [Back to Text.](#)
- ⁸ Ignatius, *Epistula ad Smyrnaeos* 6, 2. [Back to Text.](#)
- ⁹ Justin Martyr, *Apologia prima pro Christianis* 65. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁰ Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 5, 2, 2; 4, 33, 7. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹¹ Origen, *In Exodum komiliae* 13, 3. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹² Athanasius, *Sermo ad nuper baptizatos*. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹³ Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses* 22, 6. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁴ In the tract *The Mystery of the Eucharist*, [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁵ Ambrose, *De sacramentis libri sex* 4, 4, 14. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁶ Paschasius Radbertus, *De corpore et sanguine Domini*. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁷ Newman Eberhardt, *A Summary of Catholic History* (St. Louis: Herder, 1961), 1:464. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁸ Eberhardt, *Summary*, 1:610. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁹ From his tract *The Holy Eucharist: Earing the Flesh of Deity*. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²⁰ *Challenger*, October / November 1984. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²¹ O’Brien, *Faith*, 215. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²² Personal correspondence to the author from Barbara Nauer. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²³ Green, *Eucharist*, [Back to Text.](#)
- ²⁴ Nicholas Wiseman, *Lectures on the Real Presence*, 319. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²⁵ Leslie Rumble and Charles M. Carty, *Eucharist Quizzes to a Street Preacher* (Rockford, 111.: TAN Books, 1976), 7-8. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 20

- ¹ Swaggart, “Mass”, 33-34. [Back to Text.](#)
- ² Boettner, *Catholicism*, 175. [Back to Text.](#)

- ³ In his tract *The Sacrifice of the Mass*, [Back to Text](#).
- ⁴ *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 47. [Back to Text](#).
- ⁵ Rumble and Carty, *Quizzes*, 7. [Back to Text](#).
- ⁶ Lunn, *Third Day*, 103. [Back to Text](#).
- ⁷ O'Brien, *Faith*, 304. [Back to Text](#).
- ⁸ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 175. [Back to Text](#).
- ⁹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 176. [Back to Text](#).
- ¹⁰ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 176. [Back to Text](#).
- ¹¹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 176. [Back to Text](#).
- ¹² Stravinskas, *Response*, 91. [Back to Text](#).
- ¹³ Rumble and Carty, *Replies*, 1:176. [Back to Text](#).
- ¹⁴ Woodrow, *Babylon*, 125. [Back to Text](#).
- ¹⁵ Zacchello, *Secrets*, 69. [Back to Text](#).
- ¹⁶ Stravinskas, *Response*, 85. [Back to Text](#).
- ¹⁷ Jimmy Swaggart, *Roman Catholicism* (Baton Rouge: Jimmy Swaggart Ministries, 1986), 60. [Back to Text](#).
- ¹⁸ For instance, Bartholomew F. Brewer in his tract *Scriptural Truths for Roman Catholics*. [Back to Text](#).
- ¹⁹ Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 4, 17, 5. [Back to Text](#).
- ²⁰ Clement of Rome, *Epistula ad Corinthios* 44, 4. [Back to Text](#).
- ²¹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 174. [Back to Text](#).
- ²² Ronald Knox, *The Window in the Wall* (London: Burns and Oates, 1956), 80. [Back to Text](#).

CHAPTER 21

¹ I once heard a priest recount the Miracle of the Sun, as he saw it as a boy from his home in the Azores. None of his relatives believed him when he explained what he witnessed in the sky. They presumed it was a childish fantasy. Weeks later the accounts from Fatima filtered in, and only then did his family understand that he had been granted a special privilege. This kind of story, when told by the protagonist himself, can be particularly effective in convincing people of the reality of saintly interventions, but few people, particularly outside the Church, ever have a chance to talk with an eyewitness to the supernatural. [Back to Text](#).

² John Henry Newman, *Letter to the Rev. E. B. Pusey, D. D., on his*

Recent Eirenicon (1566). [Back to Text.](#)

³ Orestes A. Brownson, *Saint Worship* (Paterson, NJ.: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1963), 40. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Brownson, *Worship*, 51-54. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 142-43. [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ Zacchello, *Secrets*, 129-30. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 22

¹ At least the New Jerusalem Bible, in its footnote to Luke 1:28, says that “you who enjoy God’s favour” means “you who have been and remain filled with the divine favour”. [Back to Text.](#)

² Rene Laurentin, *The Truth of Christmas beyond the Myths* (Petersham, Mass.: St. Bede’s Publications, 1986), 18-19. [Back to Text.](#)

³ *Ineffabilis Deus* (Denz. 1641). [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ William Wordsworth, “The Virgin”, *Complete Works of William Wordsworth* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), 7:316, [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ *Munificentissimus Deus* (Denz. 2333). [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ *Fulgens Corona* 21. [Back to Text.](#)

⁷ Frank. Sheed, *The Church and I* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1974), 46. [Back to Text.](#)

⁸ M. L. Cozens, *A Handbook of Heresies* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1974), 45. [Back to Text.](#)

⁹ *Summa theologiae* III, 26, 1. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁰ *Summa theologiae* III, 30, 1. [Back to Text.](#)

¹¹ This is an example of fundamentalists’ curious penchant for proof by (misapplied) statistics. Some of them base their belief in the inspiration of Scripture on the mathematical unlikelihood of a long series of Old Testament prophecies coming true. Unfortunately for them, such an argument has nothing to say about the inspiration of biblical books that do not contain prophecies. [Back to Text.](#)

¹² Bill Jackson, *A Christian’s Guide to Roman Catholicism* (Manteca, Calif.: Christians Evangelizing Catholics, n.d.), sec. 36. [Back to Text.](#)

¹³ Jerome, *De perpetua virginitate Beatae Mariae adversus Helvidium*. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁴ Fragment in Eusebius Pamphilius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 4, 22, 4; 3, 11,

1. [Back to Text.](#)

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¹ For a dispassionate account, see Fernand Hayward, *The Inquisition* (Staten Island, N. .: Alba House, 1965). [Back to Text.](#)

² Boettner, *Catholicism*, 433. [Back to Text.](#)

³ Kevin Long, “The Spanish Inquisition: A Second Look”, *Faith & Reason*, Summer 1982, 59-60. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Rumble and Carty, *Replies*, 1:218, [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ *Goethes Werke* (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1867), 20:245. [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ William Thomas Walsh, *Isabella of Spain* (New York: Robert M. McBride, 1930), 275; R. Trevor Davies, *The Golden Century of Spain: 1501—1621* (London: Macmillan, 1937), 14. [Back to Text.](#)

⁷ Henry C. Lea, *A History of the Inquisition in the Middle Ages* (New York: Harper, 1887). [Back to Text.](#)

⁸ Elphege Vacandard, *L’Inquisition* (Paris, 1907), viii. [Back to Text.](#)

⁹ G. G. Coulton and Arnold Lunn, *Is the Catholic Church Anti-Social?* (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1946), 127. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁰ Coulton and Lunn, *Anti-Social?* 1:04-12, 128, 132. [Back to Text.](#)

¹¹ Coulton and Lunn, *Anti-Social?* 110. [Back to Text.](#)

¹² Ronald Knox and Arnold Lunn, *Difficulties* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1952), 40. [Back to Text.](#)

¹³ Only slightly less preposterous, Jimmy Swaggart claims “the Roman Catholic church murdered some *twenty million* people during the existence of the Inquisition.” *Catholicism*, 31. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁴ The present-day population of France, Spain, and Italy is about 150 million. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁵ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Inquisition”, 8:35. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁶ Jean Guitton, *Great Heresies and Church Councils* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 130. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁷ Donald Attwater, ed., *A Catholic Dictionary* (New York: Macmillan, 1949), 236. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 24

¹ Sheed and Ward, *Evidence*, 20. [Back to Text.](#)

² Frank Sheed, *Death into Life* (New York: Arena Lettres, 1977), 74. [Back to Text.](#)

³ Ronald Knox, *Enthusiasm* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), v-vi. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Knox, *Enthusiasm*, 422. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Knox, *Enthusiasm*, 515. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 25

¹ Not every apologetics book is useful in dealing with fundamentalists. Some are written more for the inquiring agnostic than for the believing Protestant, and even those that are not usually neglect fundamentalism's specific charges. Since these charges are often identical to ones leveled against the Church two generations ago, many of the most useful apologetics works are old. Distressingly few recent works about the Faith discuss problems in Church history or argue the foundation of doctrines—apparently because the authors think history is unimportant and doctrines are mutable. [Back to Text.](#)

² Editors of encyclopedias excepted, of course. [Back to Text.](#)

³ Loraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1962). [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ An example is *The Floating Admiral* (New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1931), contributors including Agatha Christie, Dorothy Sayers, G. K. Chesterton, and Ronald Knox. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Bernard Orchard et al., eds., *A Catholic Commentary, on Holy Scripture* (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1953). [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ Author of *The Layman's New Testament* (London: Sheed and Ward), 1934, which is particularly helpful in replying to verse-slinging. [Back to Text.](#)

⁷ Reginald C. Fuller et al., eds., *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (London: Nelson, 1969). [Back to Text.](#)

⁸ Raymond E. Brown et al., eds., *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968). [Back to Text.](#)

⁹ William G. Most, *Free from All Error* (Libertyville, 111.: Franciscan Mary town Press, 1985). [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁰ John Steinmueller, *A Companion to Scripture Studies* (New York:

Joseph F. Wagner, 1969). [Back to Text.](#)

¹¹ John Steinmueller, *The Sword of the Spirit* (Waco, Tex.: Stella Maris, 1978). [Back to Text.](#)

¹² Hugh Pope, *English Versions.* [Back to Text.](#)

¹³ Henri Daniel-Rops, *Daily Life in the Time of Jesus* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Servant Books, 1980). [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁴ Eberhardt, *Summary,* [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁵ Fernand Mourret, *A History of the Catholic Church* (St. Louis: Herder, 1946). [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁶ Henri Daniel-Rops, *A History of the Church of Christ* (New York: Dutton, 1960). [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁷ Warren Carroll, *A History of Christendom* (Front Royal, Va.: Christendom College Press, 1985). [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁸ Philip Hughes, *A History of the Church* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1934, 1948). [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁹ Hughes, *A Popular History of the Catholic Church* (New York: Macmillan, 1947). [Back to Text.](#)

²⁰ Eusebius Pamphilius, *The Ecclesiastical History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1975), cited in this book as *Historia ecclesiastica.* [Back to Text.](#)

²¹ Joseph Tixeront, *History of Dogmas* (Westminster, Md.: Christian Classics, 1984). [Back to Text.](#)

²² Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* (Westminster, Md.: Christian Classics, 1983, 1986). [Back to Text.](#)

²³ William A. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1970, 1979). [Back to Text.](#)

²⁴ Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (Rockford, Ill.: TAN Books, 1974). [Back to Text.](#)

²⁵ Newman, *Essay.* [Back to Text.](#)

²⁶ Sheed and Ward, *Evidence.* [Back to Text.](#)

²⁷ In writing *Catholic Evidence Training Outlines*, Frank Sheed was assisted by his wife, Maisie Ward. The portions cited in this book seem to have been written by Sheed. [Back to Text.](#)

²⁸ Rumble and Carty, *Replies.* [Back to Text.](#)

²⁹ Rumble and Carty, *Replies*, I:ix. [Back to Text.](#)

³⁰ Frank Sheed, *Theology and Sanity* (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday

Visitor, 1978). [Back to Text.](#)

³¹ Sheed, *Sanity*, ix. [Back to Text.](#)

³² Sheed, *Sanity*, 324-26. Also to be recommended is Sheed's *Theology for Beginners* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1957), which covers much of the same ground from a different perspective. [Back to Text.](#)

³³ Frank Sheed, *To Know Christ Jesus* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Servant Books, 1980). [Back to Text.](#)

³⁴ Fulton Sheen, *Life of Christ* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977). [Back to Text.](#)

³⁵ Sheen, *Life*, 9. [Back to Text.](#)

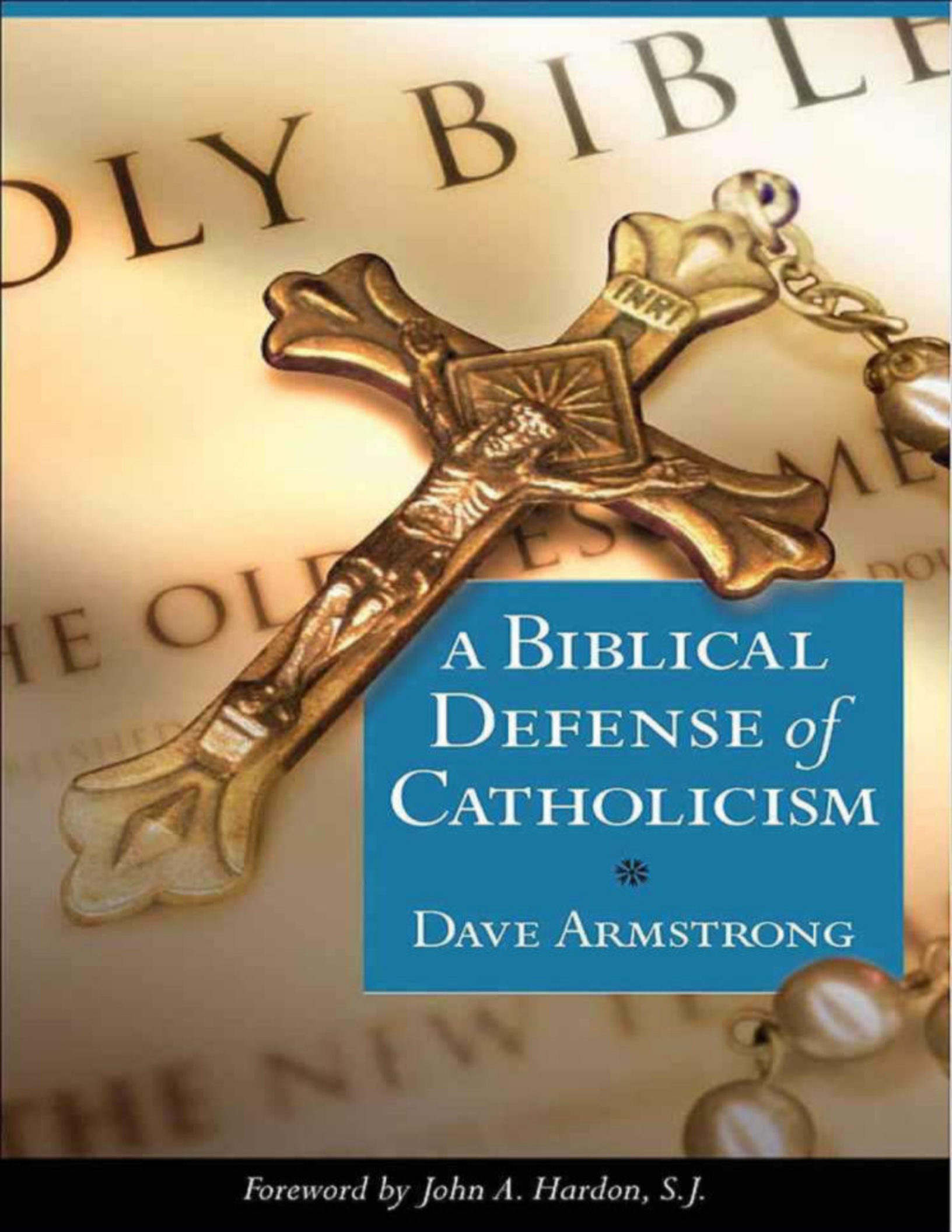
³⁶ Romano Guardini, *The Lord* (Chicago: Regnery, 1954). [Back to Text.](#)

³⁷ Guardini, *Lord*, vi. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 26

¹ Hilaire Belloc, *Survivals and New Arrivals* (New York: Macmillan, 1930), 20, 56. [Back to Text.](#)

² Joseph Ratzinger, *The Ratzinger Report* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1985), 118. [Back to Text.](#)



A BIBLICAL
DEFENSE *of*
CATHOLICISM



DAVE ARMSTRONG

Foreword by John A. Hardon, S.J.

A Biblical Defense of Catholicism

Dave Armstrong

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Biblical Evidence for Catholicism

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Dedication

To Father John A. Hardon, S.J., of blessed memory, a tireless, extraordinarily dedicated, saintly servant of God, who encouraged and exhorted thousands of aspiring Catholic catechists, writers, apologists, teachers, converts, and others to pursue their pastoral and evangelistic callings as laymen, and especially to write.

I shall never forget, and will always be thankful for, the many nights spent at the University of Detroit in the early 1990s, benefitting from the wise teaching of this singularly gifted and knowledgeable man, and observing the example of his manifest humility and kindness. By God's grace, I hope to live — as he did — by the maxim of the founder of the Jesuits, St. Ignatius Loyola:

*Teach us, good Lord,
to serve thee as thou deservest;
to give and not to count the cost;
to fight and not to heed the wounds;
to toil and not to ask for rest;
to labor and not to ask for any reward
save knowing that we do thy will.*

“Always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence.”

1 Peter 3:15

Foreword

By Father John A. Hardon, S.J.

(1914-2000)

Please allow me to introduce to you Dave Armstrong. I know Dave and his wife, Judy, personally. I received him into the Church on February 8, 1991, and baptized both their children, Paul and Michael. Dave has attended my classes on spirituality and catechetics. He was formerly a missionary as an Evangelical Protestant and has spent twelve years in intensive study of various theological topics. He carries this evangelistic zeal with him into the Catholic Church.

In particular, I highly recommend his work *A Biblical Defense of Catholicism*, which I find to be thoroughly orthodox, well written, and effective for the purpose of making Catholic truth more understandable and accessible to the public at large. Dave has edited and compiled much material from great Catholic writers past and present, interspersed with his own commentary and analysis. It is, I firmly believe, a fine book of popular Catholic apologetics.

Throughout his writing, Dave has emphasized the inability of Protestantism to explain coherently the biblical and historical data concerning Christian doctrine and practice. I feel this is very important in light of the inroads of Protestant thought into the hearts and minds of millions of insufficiently catechized Catholics.

In our Lord,

John A. Hardon, S.J.

September 17, 1993

Acknowledgments

I wish to express my heartfelt thanks and deepest gratitude to my friends, my colleagues in the Catholic apologetics community, my mentors, and my family, who have offered me much needed encouragement and helped to maintain my hopes and dreams through the years, as I endured the usual frustrations and disappointments that writers in all fields experience.

Particularly I wish to thank Fr. Peter M. J. Stravinskias, Patrick Madrid, Marcus Grodi, Dr. Kenneth Howell, Fr. Ray Ryland, Dr. Scott Hahn, Steve Ray, Lynn Nordhagen, David Palm, Gary Michuta, Art Kelly, Robert Sungenis, Gerard Serafin Bugge, Don Ross, Diane Kamer, Stephen Hand, Leno Poli, John McAlpine, Pete Vere, Kristine Franklin, Michael Forrest, Shawn McElhinney, Paul Thigpen, John Betts, Andrew Holt, Dick Kelley, Jared Olar, Tom Wilkes, Chris LaRose, and two esteemed Anglican friends, Bret Bellamy and Fr. George Burns. There are many others as well. I hope no one feels left out if I didn't mention their names. They know who they are! Without their support, this book would not have seen the light of day.

Most of all, I want to express my love and profound appreciation for my one-of-a-kind, beautiful wife, Judy, and my three precious sons, Paul, Michael, and Matthew, for their undying faith in me and unending patience in allowing Daddy or hubby to work countless hours on his computer. Their support is crucial for my motivation and zeal. They will never know how much I love all of them, at least not in words, for no words are adequate to express how I feel.

It is written — proverbially — in Holy Scripture, that “a man's enemies shall be in his own household” (cf. Matt. 10:36). That is most assuredly *not* the case in my house, and I will be eternally grateful to God and thankful to my wonderful family for this blessing (life provides more than enough frustrations as it is). They are (on an earthly, human plane) my joy, my hope, and my happiness.

Introduction

During the course of 1990, I was actively and sincerely engaged in a lengthy historical and biblical critique of Catholicism (primarily having to do with papal infallibility) as a result of the ongoing dialogue taking place in an ecumenical discussion group I had initiated. I thought I might entice my Catholic friends out from under the alleged “yoke” of Rome. Little did I know that before the year was over, *I* would be the one to change *my* mind!

With heartfelt joy and a keen sense of discovery, I now attempt to uphold what I formerly attacked and to critique many of the Evangelical Protestant interpretations of Scripture that I strongly affirmed not long ago. Formerly, as an Evangelical countercult and campus missionary, I was committed to the defense of *mere*, or *generic*, Christianity. Now I seek to defend that Faith which might be called ancient or historic.

The present work endeavors to show that Catholicism can more than hold its own with regard to the evidence of the Bible, as it relates to distinctive doctrines that are considered unbiblical or even antibiblical by many evangelical Protestants. Our separated brethren often contend that Catholics (to understate it) are very unfamiliar with the Bible. This is, sadly, probably true as a general observation (although biblical illiteracy is certainly not confined to Catholics).

Nevertheless, it has no bearing on the question of whether the Bible in fact upholds the teachings of Catholicism. Many Catholic biblical arguments and interesting exegetical conclusions are entirely unfamiliar to most Protestants (and for that matter, most Catholics as well).

I myself learned of the vast majority of these scriptural evidences in favor of Catholicism while engaged in the research for this book, which was itself originally intended as a defense of my newfound views, primarily for the sake of Protestant friends who were curious as to the rationale behind my conversion to Catholicism. The more I studied Catholic apologetic works (many of which were older books obtained at used bookstores), the more I realized what a wealth of biblical material existed in favor of Catholic positions on a number of “controversial” doctrines.

I was continually amazed at the depth and solidity of these arguments, and pleasantly surprised that the Bible, which I had loved and studied intensely for ten years, could so confidently be utilized as a bulwark in defense of the Catholic Faith. Catholicism, rightly understood, is — I believe strongly — an eminently and thoroughly *biblical* belief system. This was entirely contrary to what I had so cavalierly assumed as an Evangelical Protestant. Reputable Protestant commentaries often ignore, overlook, or present very unsatisfactory explanations for Catholic biblical evidences, sometimes offering no more than an unsubstantiated denial of the Catholic interpretation, with no alternative.

The weight of the evidence herein presented is all the more compelling, I think, by virtue of its cumulative effect, which is well-nigh overwhelming. Time and time again, I discovered that Catholicism is altogether consistent with biblical teaching. Many claim that distinctive Catholic beliefs are simply not found in Scripture. Often, however, those who present this charge have little or no understanding of the notion of the *development* of doctrine, *implicit* biblical evidence, or the complementary (and biblically based) roles of Tradition and the Church. All of these factors and other related ones will be examined in this work.

Catholics need only to show the harmony of a doctrine with holy Scripture. It is not our view that every tenet of the Christian Faith must appear whole, explicit, and often in the pages of the Bible. We also acknowledge sacred Tradition, the authority of the Church, and the development of understanding of essentially unchanging Christian truths, as is to be expected with a living organism (the Body of Christ) guided by the Holy Spirit. A belief implicitly biblical is not necessarily antibiblical or unbiblical. But we maintain that the Protestant principle of *sola Scriptura* (“Scripture alone”), on the other hand, is incoherent and — I dare say — quite unbiblical.

In fact, many doctrines accepted by Protestants are either not found in the Bible at all (for example, *sola Scriptura* and the Canon of Scripture), are based on only a very few direct passages (for example, the Virgin Birth), or are indirectly deduced from many implicit passages (for example, the Trinity, the two natures of Jesus, and many attributes of God, such as his omnipresence and omniscience).

I have no *formal* theological training, although I have done a great deal of independent study over the last twenty years. This work is intended primarily as a layman's observations for other laymen, without pretending to be anything beyond that. C. S. Lewis, the great Anglican Christian apologist (and my favorite author) often made a similar claim for his own writings. He was formally educated in English literature, not in theology. To my knowledge, neither G. K. Chesterton nor Malcolm Muggeridge had any formal theological education either. They were journalists by trade and self-definition. Yet they — along with Lewis — are among the most celebrated Christian apologists of the twentieth century.

Furthermore, my relative lack of credentials might actually be somewhat of an advantage on my part, from the vantage point of Protestant assumptions about the perspicuity, or “clearness,” of the Bible (in terms of its outlines of the means whereby a man can be saved). Martin Luther made a famous remark to the effect that even a “plowboy” could interpret Scripture in the main without the necessary help of the Church. This is, then, largely a Catholic “plowboy's” attempt to learn and to share from Scripture itself, although without in the least denying the authoritativeness of the Church and Tradition.

I am always wholeheartedly willing to interact with scholars and reflective and thoughtful nonscholars who hold opposing viewpoints. If, however, even superior theological education cannot suffice for an adequate, reasonable alternate explanation over against the Catholic interpretations of various portions of Scripture presented herein, then it seems to me that this would serve only to strengthen the case I have made as an ordinary layman.

The widespread existence of Evangelical Protestant commentaries and various lexicons, Bible dictionaries, concordances, and so forth, for the use of laypeople, is based on a presupposition that individuals without formal theological education can arrive at conclusions on their own. This is largely what I am attempting presently. The only difference is that I am willing to modify or relinquish any conclusions of mine that turn out to be contrary to the clear teachings and dogmas of the Catholic Church, whereas the quintessential Protestant *ultimately* can stand on his own (like Luther), “on the Bible,” against, if need be, the whole Tradition of the Christian Church. I

formulate my conclusions based on the work of Church councils, great Catholic scholars, Fathers, Doctors, and saints, just as the conscientious Protestant would consult the scholars and great pastors and theologians of his own persuasion.

Far from having to force Scripture to conform to Catholic teaching, or to equivocate, or to rationalize away glaring contradictions, I've found that, invariably and delightfully, the converse is true: Catholicism is indeed the round peg, so to speak, that naturally fits into the round hole of Scripture. I have not undergone any torments of conscience or "intellectual suicide" in this endeavor, and I am more confident than ever that the Catholic Church is the "Bible Church" par excellence.

This discovery will never cease to be wondrous and marvelous to me, as well as to many other fellow converts to the Catholic Church via Evangelical Protestantism. For it means that we can continue to be Evangelical in every proper and true sense of that word: to love and cherish the Scriptures, to follow Jesus with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind, and to proclaim the message found in the Bible in its fullness and apostolic integrity, unmingled with the error of excessively individualistic interpretation and competing, contradicting denominational beliefs. Accordingly, this work cites hundreds of scriptural passages from 229 of the 259 chapters in the New Testament (eighty-eight percent), and more than 250 Old Testament references.

Catholicism is not a blind Faith, but rather, one that is altogether reasonable, as far as reason goes (without excluding at all the essential religious characteristics of mystery, miracle, supernatural revelation, and love). A Catholic need not forsake hermeneutical rigor or critical acumen in any way.

Catholics can, assuredly, learn much from many positive and godly attributes of Evangelicalism and Protestantism in general. Likewise, a Protestant can derive much benefit from Catholicism, whether he feels compelled to convert or not. The non-Catholic can — after grappling with facts and arguments such as those presented herein — eventually recognize that Catholics are able to put forth a very strong biblical case for their beliefs. Likewise, the average Catholic in the pew, who often suffers from a marked lack of spiritual confidence, can greatly benefit from an increased familiarity with the biblical arguments that bolster the Catholic position.

Each chapter contains an authoritative definition and a relatively brief exposition of the Catholic doctrine to be defended, followed by extensive scriptural commentary on individual passages. Footnotes will direct the reader who wishes to pursue issues in greater depth to other relevant works and reinforce the arguments from scholarly sources, but will not interrupt the flow of the writing — intended to be popular and relatively nontechnical in style.

It is not my intention to minimize the importance of Tradition, councils, papal pronouncements, and suchlike at all. Rather, I seek to exhibit as many of the biblical evidences as can be brought to bear on any particular distinctively Catholic doctrine (at least all that I have found; certainly more exist). Doctrines held in common with Protestants and Eastern Orthodox Christians, such as the Trinity, the bodily Resurrection of Christ, Heaven and Hell, and so forth are not here dealt with.

All Christians agree that it is worthwhile to study and meditate upon the Bible — God's own inspired revelation for all mankind. Non-Catholics and even non-Christians might receive here some biblical food for thought, even if they are unconvinced by my arguments. It is a worthwhile endeavor to build bridges of understanding between Christians of all stripes, as commanded in Scripture. If this work causes the reader to delve more deeply into holy Scripture or into various Catholic sources, or to think more critically and deeply about the biblical evidences for various Protestant and Catholic doctrines, then it will have fulfilled its purpose.

Chapter One

Bible and Tradition

“Maintain the traditions . . .”

Catholicism and Protestantism differ fundamentally with regard to the relationship between sacred Scripture and sacred Tradition: the Bible on the one hand and the historical doctrines and dogmas of the Christian Church on the other. Protestantism tends to see a certain dichotomy between the pure Word of God in the Bible and the Tradition of the Catholic Church, which is considered to be too often corrupted by “arbitrary traditions of men” (in this vein Matthew 15:3-6, Mark 7:8-13, and Colossians 2:8 are cited).¹

For Protestants, Scripture alone, or *sola Scriptura*, is the source and rule of the Christian Faith. As such, it is superior to and judges all Tradition. It is sufficient in and of itself for a full exposition of Christianity and for the attainment of salvation.²

The concept of *sola Scriptura*, it must be noted, is not in principle opposed to the importance and validity of Church history, Tradition, ecumenical councils, or the authority of Church Fathers and prominent theologians. The difference lies in the relative position of authority held by Scripture and Church institutions and proclamations. In theory, the Bible judges all of these, since, for the Evangelical Protestant, it alone is infallible, and the Church, popes, and councils are not.³

In actuality, however, this belief has not led to doctrinal uniformity, as the history of Protestant sectarianism abundantly testifies. The prevalence of *sola Scriptura*, according to Catholic thinking, has facilitated a widespread ignorance and disregard of Church history among the Protestants in the pews.⁴ Protestantism is clearly much less historically oriented than Catholicism, largely for the above reasons. Recently, several evangelical scholars have frankly critiqued the weakness of either *sola Scriptura* itself,⁵ or else the extreme version of it, which might be called “Bible Only” (a virtually total exclusion of Church history and authority).⁶

Whereas Protestantism takes an either-or approach on this issue and many other theological ideas, Catholicism has a both-and perspective. Thus, Scripture and Tradition are inextricably linked: twin fonts of the one spring of revelation.⁷

Tradition is defined as the handing on of beliefs and practices by written as well as oral means.⁸ The Bible is part of a Tradition larger than itself, of which it is an encapsulation or crystallization, so to speak.⁹

The first Christians preached; they didn't hand out copies of the New Testament (most of which was not yet written, much less established in its final form). Catholicism claims that its Tradition is neither more nor less than the preserved teaching of Christ as revealed to, and proclaimed by, the Apostles. Development occurs, but only in increased *understanding*, not in the *essence* of this apostolic Tradition. Catholicism claims to be the guardian or custodian of the original deposit of Faith which was "once for all delivered to the saints."¹⁰

It must also be pointed out that the written word and mass literacy have been widespread only since the invention of the movable-type printing press, around 1440. Thus, it could not have been the primary carrier of the gospel for at least fourteen centuries. Christians before the time of the Protestant Reformation learned mostly from homilies, sacraments, the Liturgy and its year-long calendar, Christian holidays, devotional practices, family instruction, church architecture, and other sacred art that reflected biblical themes. For all these Christian believers, *sola Scriptura* would have appeared as an absurd abstraction and practical impossibility.

New Testament evidence for Tradition

Tradition, even in the extensive Catholic sense, permeates Scripture. Only an antecedent prejudice against such a notion or an undue concentration on Jesus' rejection of *corrupt* human pharisaical traditions, could blind one to the considerable force of the scriptural data. Put another way, Scripture does not teach *sola Scriptura*, a concept that constitutes the use of a document (the Bible) contrary to the same document's explicit and implicit testimony. In

other words, Scripture alone should lead the impartial seeker *to* Tradition and the Church, rather than to a disdain of Tradition. G. K. Chesterton called Tradition the “democracy of the dead.” It is foolish for any Christian to disregard what God has taught millions of other Christians throughout the centuries.

We must all do our best to avoid approaching Scripture with a philosophy that is itself not at all biblical, and forcing Scripture (and Christianity) into our own mold. The Bible itself has plenty to say about its own authority vis-à-vis that of Tradition and the Church.

The Bible is not all-inclusive

In the New Testament, first of all, we find clear-cut testimony to the effect that Scripture does not contain the whole of Christ’s teaching. Probably no one would deny this, but Protestants usually deny that any of Christ’s teachings *not* recorded in Scripture could possibly be faithfully transmitted orally by primitive apostolic Tradition. Reflection upon the closeness of Jesus to his disciples and on the nature of human interaction and memory makes quite dubious any such fancy. Who could make the claim that the Apostles remembered (and communicated to others) absolutely nothing except what we have in the four Gospels?

We might compare the Bible to the U.S. Constitution, which is not coterminous with the constitutional law that derives from it (and ultimately from the natural law alluded to in the Declaration of Independence). Nor is the Constitution workable in practice apart from judges who interpret it. The analogy is not perfect, but close enough to make the point.

The commentary in this chapter, it should be emphasized, is intended, not to denigrate Scripture in the least, but rather, to set it in its proper context within the living Christian community (the Church), and to accept it *on its own terms*. It seems that whenever the Catholic argues that the Bible is not the be-all and end-all of the Christian Faith, he is accused of disrespecting God’s Word, etc. This is one of many unfortunate Protestant false dichotomies that will be dispelled in the course of our examination of Scripture.

Mark 4:33: “With many such parables he spoke the word to them. . . .”

In other words, by implication, many parables are not recorded in Scripture.

Mark 6:34: “He began to teach them many things.”

None of these many things are recorded here.

John 16:12: “I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.”

Perhaps these “many things” were spoken during his post-Resurrection appearances alluded to in Acts 1:2-3 (see below). Very few of these teachings are recorded, and those that are contain only minimal detail.

John 20:30: “Now, Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book.”

John 21:25: “But there are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.”

Acts 1:2-3: “To [the Apostles] he presented himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days, and speaking of the kingdom of God” (see also Luke 24:15-16, 25-27).

Paradosis (“Tradition”)

The most important Greek word in the New Testament for *tradition* is *paradosis*. It is used four times in reference to Christian tradition:

1 Corinthians 11:2: “I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I have delivered them to you.”

Colossians 2:8: “See to it that no one makes a prey of you by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental

spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ.”

Paradosis simply means something handed on or passed down from one person to another. This “tradition” might be bad (Matt. 15:2 ff.; Col. 2:8), or opposed to the will of God (Mark 7:8 ff.), or entirely good (1 Cor. 11:2 and many other passages below). This distinction must be constantly kept in mind in the debate over the utility and propriety of Tradition.

2 Thessalonians 2:15: “Stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter.”

2 Thessalonians 3:6: “Keep away from any brother who is living in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us.”

Tradition in the Bible may be either written or oral. It implies that the writer (in the above instances, St. Paul) is not expressing his own peculiar viewpoints, but is delivering a message received from someone else (see, e.g., 1 Corinthians 11:23). The importance of the tradition does not rest in its *form*, but in its *content*.

Word of God/Word of the Lord

When the phrases “word of God” or “word of the Lord” appear in Acts and in the Epistles, they are almost always referring to oral preaching, not to Scripture. The Greek word usually used is *logos*, which is the title of Jesus himself in John 1:1: “The Word was God.” Indeed, this holds true for the entire Bible, as a general rule. Protestants, unfortunately, tend to think “written word” whenever they see *word* in Scripture, but even common sense tells us that the English *word* refers also to spoken utterances. The latter is a more common and dominant motif in Scripture than the former. Much of Scripture is a recording of what was originally oral proclamation (for example, the Ten Commandments, Jesus’ entire teaching — since he wrote nothing himself — or St. Peter’s sermon at Pentecost). Thus, the oral component of Christianity is unavoidable, and a position that attempts to undermine this aspect is self-defeating from the outset.

Tradition according to Jesus Christ and St. Paul

Colossians 2:8 (see above) has often been used by evangelical Protestants (especially fundamentalists) to condemn both philosophy and Tradition, but offers no support for either position. For St. Paul is here contrasting the traditions and philosophies of men with that of Christ. He isn't condemning things in essence, but rather, in *corrupt* form. We've seen how St. Paul uses the same word for "tradition" positively in three instances.

Likewise, Jesus uses *paradosis* in condemning corrupt human traditions of the Pharisees (Matt. 15:3, 6; Mark 7:8-9, 13), not apostolic Tradition per se, since to do so would contradict St. Paul's use of the same word, as well as his own upholding of true Jewish teachings in the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere. Notice, too, that in the instances above, Jesus qualifies the word *tradition* in every case by saying "your tradition" or "traditions of men," as does St. Paul in Colossians 2:8. When St. Paul speaks of apostolic Tradition, he doesn't qualify the word at all.

Paradidomi ("deliver")

A related word, *paradidomi*, is used with reference to Christian tradition, in the sense of "deliver," at least seven times:

Luke 1:1-2: "Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things which have been accomplished among us, just as they were delivered to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses . . ."

St. Luke is saying that these traditions handed down, or delivered, are not mere fables, legends, myths, or suchlike, but were dependable eyewitness accounts. Here also we have oral as well as written sources, with the former predominant at this point.

1 Corinthians 11:23: "For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread . . ." (see also 1 Cor. 11:2 above; Rom. 6:17).

1 Corinthians 15:3: “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures.”

It is striking here how Tradition and Scripture are one unified revelation, as in Catholic teaching. True Tradition can never contradict Scripture, but rather complements, explains, and expands upon it.

2 Peter 2:21: “For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than, after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them.”

Jude 3: “Contend for the Faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.”

Paralambano (“received”)

The word *paralambano* (“received”) appears also at least seven times with regard to Christian or apostolic Tradition. Thus, there are three related concepts: the tradition or doctrine that is given or, literally, “handed down,” and the acts of delivering and receiving the tradition:

1 Corinthians 15:1-2: “I preached to you the gospel, which you received, in which you stand, by which you are saved, if you hold it fast — unless you believed in vain” (see also 1 Cor. 11:23 and 15:3 above).

Note the reference to memory: the whole drift of the passage is an oral gospel and tradition transmitted by preaching and preserved by memory.

Galatians 1:9, 12: “If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed. . . . For I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ.”

This sounds rather like the anathema^{[41](#)} statements of the Council of Trent, which are so objectionable to many. Here St. Paul completely dissociates the gospel he received (which he elsewhere equates with Tradition) from traditions derived from men. The true Tradition originates wholly from

above. *This* is the Tradition of which Catholicism claims to have been merely the custodian for nearly two thousand years. The next passage reiterates this:

1 Thessalonians 2:13: “When you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as what it really is, the word of God” (see also 2 Thess. 3:6 above).

Tradition, Gospel, and Word of God are synonymous

It is obvious from the above biblical data that the concepts of *Tradition*, *Gospel*, and *Word of God* (as well as other terms) are essentially synonymous. All are predominantly oral, and all are referred to as being delivered and received:

1 Corinthians 11:2: “Maintain the traditions . . . even as I have delivered them to you.”

2 Thessalonians 2:15: “Hold to the traditions . . . taught . . . by word of mouth or by letter.”

2 Thessalonians 3:6: “. . . the tradition that you received from us.”

1 Corinthians 15:1: “. . . the gospel, which you received . . .”

1 Galatians 1:9: “. . . the gospel . . . which you received.”

1 Thessalonians 2:9: “We preached to you the gospel of God.”

Acts 8:14: “Samaria had received the word of God.”

1 Thessalonians 2:13: “You received the word of God, which you heard from us. . . .”

2 Peter 2:21: “. . . the holy commandment delivered to them.”

Jude 3: “. . . the Faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.”

In St. Paul's two letters to the Thessalonians alone, we see that three of the above terms are used interchangeably. Clearly then, *tradition* is not a dirty word in the Bible, particularly for St. Paul. If, on the other hand, we want to maintain that it is, then *gospel* and *Word of God* are also bad words! Thus, the commonly asserted dichotomy between the gospel and Tradition, or between the Bible and Tradition, is unbiblical itself and must be discarded by the truly biblically-minded person as (quite ironically) a corrupt tradition of men.

Oral Tradition according to St. Paul

In his two letters to Timothy, St. Paul makes some fascinating remarks about the importance of oral tradition:

2 Timothy 1:13-14: "Follow the pattern of the sound words which you have heard from me. . . . Guard the truth which has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us."

2 Timothy 2:2: "And what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."

St. Paul says that Timothy is not only to receive and "follow the pattern" of his *oral* teaching, in addition to his *written* instruction, but also to teach others the same. The Catholic Church seeks to do this with regard to the entire "deposit of Faith," or the Apostles' teaching (Acts 2:42), in accordance with St. Paul.

Church, not Scripture, "pillar and ground of truth"

Almost any informed Evangelical Protestant, if asked to define the "pillar and ground of the truth" according to the Bible, would surely reply, "The Bible itself, of course." Yet Scripture does not so pronounce; it states, in perfect accord with Catholicism and in opposition to *sola Scriptura*: ". . . the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15).

Other Bible translations render *bulwark* as “ground,” “foundation,” or “support.”

Two sola Scriptura proof texts debunked

2 Timothy 3:16-17: “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

This is the most-often-used supposed proof text for *sola Scriptura*, yet a strong argument can be put forth that it teaches no such thing. John Henry Cardinal Newman (1801-1890), the brilliant English convert to Catholicism from Anglicanism, shows the fallacy of such reasoning:

“It is quite evident that this passage furnishes no argument whatever that the sacred Scripture, without Tradition, is the *sole rule of faith*; for although sacred Scripture is *profitable* for these ends, still it is not said to be *sufficient*. The Apostle requires the aid of Tradition (2 Thess. 2:15). Moreover, the Apostle here refers to the Scriptures which Timothy was taught in his infancy. Now, a good part of the New Testament was not written in his boyhood: some of the Catholic Epistles were not written even when St. Paul wrote this, and none of the books of the New Testament were then placed on the canon of the Scripture books. He refers, then, to the Scriptures of the *Old* Testament, and if the argument from this passage proved anything, it would prove *too* much, viz., that the Scriptures of the *New* Testament were *not* necessary for a rule of faith. It is hardly necessary to remark that this passage furnishes no proof of the inspiration of the several books of sacred Scripture, even of those admitted to be such. . . . For we are not told . . . what the books or portions of *inspired Scripture* are.^{[12](#)}

In addition to these logical and historical arguments, one can also differ with the Protestant interpretation of this passage on contextual, analogical, and exegetical grounds. In 2 Timothy alone (context), St. Paul makes reference to oral Tradition three times (1:13-14; 2:2; 3:14). In the last instance, St. Paul says of the tradition, “knowing from whom you learned it.” The personal

reference proves he is not talking about Scripture, but of himself as the tradition-bearer, so to speak. Elsewhere (exegesis), St. Paul frequently espouses oral tradition (Rom. 6:17; 1 Cor. 11:2, 23, 15:1-3; Gal. 1:9, 12; Col. 2:8; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Thess. 2:15, 3:6). The “exclusivist” or “dichotomous” form of reasoning employed by Protestant apologists here is fundamentally flawed. For example, to reason by analogy, let’s examine a very similar passage, Ephesians 4:11-15:

And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are able to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.

If the Greek *artios* (Revised Standard Version [RSV], *complete*; King James Version [KJV], *perfect*) proves the sole sufficiency of Scripture in 2 Timothy, then *teleios* (RSV, *mature manhood*; KJV, *perfect*) in Ephesians would likewise prove the sufficiency of pastors, teachers, and so forth for the attainment of Christian perfection. Note that in Ephesians 4:11-15, the Christian believer is “equipped,” “built up,” brought into “unity and mature manhood,” “knowledge” of Jesus, “the fullness of Christ,” and even preserved from doctrinal confusion by means of the teaching function of the Church. This is a far stronger statement of the “perfecting” of the saints than 2 Timothy 3:16-17, yet it doesn’t even mention Scripture.

Therefore, the Protestant interpretation of 2 Timothy 3:16-17 proves too much, since if all nonscriptural elements are excluded in 2 Timothy, then, by analogy, Scripture would logically have to be excluded in Ephesians. It is far more reasonable to synthesize the two passages in an inclusive, complementary fashion, by recognizing that the mere absence of one or more elements in one passage does not mean that they are nonexistent. Thus, the Church and Scripture are both equally necessary and important for teaching. This is precisely the Catholic view. Neither passage is intended in an

exclusive sense.

1 Corinthians 4:6: “. . . that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another.”

The clause emphasized above, which is used as a proof for *sola Scriptura*, is thought to be difficult in the Greek, so much so that one Protestant translator, James Moffatt, considered it beyond recovery and refused to translate it! Yet the meaning seems fairly clear when the whole context is taken into consideration (at the very least, verses 3-6). This basic principle of biblical interpretation (context) is often neglected, even by good scholars, presumably due to presuppositional bias. For example, the great Evangelical theologian G. C. Berkouwer, who writes many insightful and edifying things about Scripture, falls prey to this tendency repeatedly, in using this portion of a verse to imply the notion of *sola Scriptura*, in his *magnum opus* on Scripture.¹³

One simply has to read the phrase following the “proof text” to see what it is to which St. Paul is referring. The whole passage is an ethical exhortation to avoid pride, arrogance, and favoritism and as such, has nothing to do with the idea of the Bible and the written word as some sort of all-encompassing standard of authority apart from the Church. St. Paul’s teaching elsewhere (as just examined) precludes such an interpretation anyway. One of the foundational tenets of Protestant hermeneutics is to interpret obscure portions of Scripture by means of clearer, related passages.¹⁴ St. Paul is telling the Corinthians to observe the broad ethical precepts of the Old Testament (some translators render the above clause as “keep within the rules”), as indicated by his habitual phrase “it is written,” which is always used to precede Old Testament citations throughout his letters. Assuming that he is referring to the Old Testament (the most straightforward interpretation), this would again prove too much, for he would not be including the entire New Testament, whose Canon (that is, the list of books that belong to it) was not even finally determined until 397 A.D.

To summarize, then, 1 Corinthians 4:6 (that is, one part of the verse) fails as a proof text for *sola Scriptura* for at least three reasons:

- The context is clearly one of *ethics*. We cannot transgress (go beyond) the precepts of Scripture concerning relationships. This doesn't forbid the discussion of ethics outside of Scripture (which itself cannot possibly treat every conceivable ethical dispute and dilemma).
- The phrase does not even necessarily have to refer to Scripture, although this appears to be the majority opinion of scholars (with which I agree).
- If "what is written" refers to Scripture, it certainly points to the Old Testament alone (obviously not the Protestant "rule of faith"). Thus, this verse proves too much and too little simultaneously.

All "proof texts" for *sola Scriptura* are demonstrably inadequate and run up against biblical (and Catholic) teachings of Tradition and Church, as well as the insuperable difficulty of the Canon of the Bible, and how it was determined (by the Catholic Church).

Cardinal Newman, bristling with insight as always, gets right to the core of the issue in the following critique of Protestants' allegiance to *sola Scriptura*:

That Scripture is the Rule of Faith is in fact an assumption so congenial to the state of mind and course of thought usual among Protestants, that it seems to them rather a truism than a truth. If they are in controversy with Catholics on any point of faith, they at once ask, *Where do you find it in Scripture?* and if Catholics reply, as they must do, that it is not necessarily in Scripture in order to be true, nothing can persuade them that such an answer is not an evasion, and a triumph to themselves. Yet it is by no means self-evident that all religious truth is to be found in a number of works, however sacred, which were written at different times, and did not always form one book; and in fact it is a doctrine very hard to prove. . . . It [is] . . . an assumption so deeply sunk into the popular mind, that it is a work of great difficulty to obtain from its maintainers an acknowledgment that it is an assumption.¹⁵

The New Testament Canon

Although the question of the nature of the New Testament Canon is, strictly speaking, a historical one, we will examine it briefly, since it is obviously of

crucial importance to biblical authority and to the notion of *sola Scriptura*.

For Protestants to exercise the principles of *sola Scriptura*, they first have to accept the antecedent premise of what books constitute Scripture — in particular, the New Testament books. This is not as simple as it may seem at first, accustomed as we are to accepting without question the New Testament as we have it today. Although indeed there was, roughly speaking, a broad consensus in the early Church as to which books were scriptural, nevertheless, enough divergence of opinion existed reasonably to cast doubt on the Protestant concepts of the Bible's *self-authenticating* nature, and the *self-interpreting* maxim of *perspicuity* (see Appendix One). The following overview of the history of acceptance of biblical books (and also nonbiblical ones as Scripture) will help the reader to avoid overgeneralizing or oversimplifying the complicated historical process by which we obtained our present Bible.

The History of the New Testament Canon¹⁶

Explanation of Symbols:

* *Book accepted (or quoted)*

? *Book personally disputed or mentioned as disputed*

x *Book rejected, unknown, or not cited*

New Testament Period and Apostolic Fathers (30-160)

Summary: The New Testament is not clearly distinguished from other Christian writings

Gospels: Generally accepted by 130

Justin Martyr's "Gospels" contain apocryphal material

Polycarp first uses all four Gospels now in Scripture

Acts: Scarcely known or quoted

Pauline Corpus: Generally accepted by 130, yet quotations are rarely introduced as scriptural

Philippians, 1 Timothy: x Justin Martyr

2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon: x Polycarp, Justin Martyr

Hebrews: Not considered canonical

? Clement of Rome

x Polycarp, Justin Martyr

James: Not considered canonical; not even quoted

x Polycarp, Justin Martyr

1 Peter: Not considered canonical

2 Peter: Not considered canonical, nor cited

1, 2, 3 John: Not considered canonical

x Justin Martyr

1 John ? Polycarp / **3 John** x Polycarp

Jude: Not considered canonical

x Polycarp, Justin Martyr

Revelation: Not canonical

x Polycarp

Irenaeus to Origen (160-250)

Summary: Awareness of a Canon begins toward the end of the second century

Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria first use the phrase “New Testament”

Gospels: Accepted

Acts: Gradually accepted

Pauline Corpus: Accepted with some exceptions:

2 Timothy:

x Clement of Alexandria

Philemon:

x Irenaeus, Origen, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria

Hebrews: Not canonical before the fourth century in the West

? Origen

* First accepted by Clement of Alexandria

James: Not canonical

? First mentioned by Origen

x Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria

1 Peter: Gradual acceptance

* First accepted by Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria

2 Peter: Not canonical

? First mentioned by Origen

x Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria

1 John: Gradual acceptance

* First accepted by Irenaeus

x Origen

2 John: Not canonical

? Origen

x Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria

3 John: Not canonical

? Origen

x Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria

Jude: Gradual acceptance

* Clement of Alexandria

x Origen

Revelation: Gradual acceptance

* First accepted by Clement of Alexandria

x Baroccio Canon, c. 206

Epistle of Barnabas:

* Clement of Alexandria, Origen

Shepherd of Hermas:

* Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen, Clement of Alexandria

The Didache:

* Clement of Alexandria, Origen

The Apocalypse of Peter:

* Clement of Alexandria

The Acts of Paul:

* Origen

* Appears in Greek, Latin, Syriac, Armenian, and Arabic translations

Gospel of Hebrews:

* Clement of Alexandria

Muratorian Canon (c. 190)

Excludes Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter

Includes The Apocalypse of Peter, Wisdom of Solomon

Origen to Nicaea (250-325)

Summary: The “Catholic epistles” and Revelation are still being disputed

Gospels, Acts, Pauline Corpus: Accepted

Hebrews: * Accepted in the East

x, ? Still disputed in the West

James: x, ? Still disputed in the East

x Not accepted in the West

1 Peter: Fairly well accepted

2 Peter: Still disputed

1 John: Fairly well accepted

2, 3 John, Jude: Still disputed

Revelation: Disputed, especially in the East

x Dionysius

Council of Nicaea (325)

Questions canonicity of James, 2 Peter, 2 John, 3 John, and Jude

From 325 to the Council of Carthage (397)

Summary: St. Athanasius first lists our present twenty-seven New Testament books as such in 367. Disputes still persist concerning several books, almost right up until 397, when the Canon is authoritatively closed.

Gospels, Acts, Pauline Corpus, 1 Peter, 1 John: Accepted

Hebrews: Eventually accepted in the West

James: Slow acceptance

Not even quoted in the West until around 350!

2 Peter: Eventually accepted

2, 3 John, Jude: Eventually accepted

Revelation: Eventually accepted

x Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom, Gregory Nazianzen

Epistle of Barnabas: * Codex Sinaiticus — late fourth century

Shepherd of Hermas: * Codex Sinaiticus — late fourth century

Used as a textbook for catechumens, according to Athanasius

1 Clement, 2 Clement: * Codex Alexandrinus — early fifth century (!)

Protestants do, of course, accept the traditional Canon of the New Testament. By doing so, they necessarily acknowledged the authority of the Catholic Church. If they did not, it is likely that Protestantism would have disappeared like almost all of the old heresies of the first millennium of the Church.

Chapter Two

Justification

“Faith apart from works is barren”

Justification, according to Catholicism, is a true eradication of sin, a supernatural infusion of grace, and a renewal of the inner man.¹⁷ The Catholic Church holds that true faith in Jesus Christ is not saving faith unless it bears fruit in good works, without which spiritual growth is impossible.¹⁸ In this way, good works are necessary for salvation, and sanctification is not separated from justification. Rather, the two are intrinsically intertwined, as with the Bible and Tradition.¹⁹

Sanctification is the process of being made actually holy, not merely legally declared so.²⁰ It begins at Baptism,²¹ is facilitated by means of prayer, acts of charity, and the aid of sacraments, and is consummated upon entrance into Heaven and union with God.²² Good habits help to make a man good, and bad habits make him bad. Once this premise is accepted, all sorts of pious devotional and penitential practices (often denigrated in some fashion by Protestants) become valuable helps in the Christian walk, rather than hindrances to “pure” worship.²³ *Grace* is defined in Catholicism as the gratuitous benevolence shown by God toward the human race, and it is an absolutely unmerited, free gift of God, made possible through our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, and his atoning death on the Cross for us.²⁴ When, therefore, Catholics speak of merit on the part of man, it must be understood in a secondary, derivative sense.²⁵

St. Augustine wrote:

The Lord made Himself a debtor, not by receiving something, but by promising something. One does not say to Him, “Pay for what You received,” but, “Pay what You promised.”²⁶

Likewise, the Second Council of Orange in 529 declared:

Whatever good works we do are deserving of reward, not through any merit anterior to grace; their performance, rather, is due to a prior gift of grace to which we have no claim.

The Bible teaches that God rewards good works, and that these are not antithetical at all to saving faith, as we shall see. Nor is human motivation for doing good works at all denied in Catholicism. Mere external works done without purity of heart and charity are of little worth (1 Cor. 13:3).

Catholicism holds that a person cannot save himself by his own self-originated works. This is Catholic dogma and always has been, notwithstanding any distortions of it by nominal and under-educated Catholics or ill-informed anti-Catholic polemicists. Nor is anyone saved or redeemed by Mary or a pope or anyone else besides our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

On this particular matter, there is no difference whatsoever between Catholic and Protestant.²⁷ The doctrine of “works salvation,” often wrongly attributed to Catholicism, is a heresy known as Pelagianism, which was in fact roundly condemned by St. Augustine (354-430), the above-mentioned council in 529, and the Council of Trent (canon 1 on Justification, January 13, 1547).

Catholicism also makes a distinction between mortal and venial sins. A mortal sin is a serious transgression of God’s moral law, committed with full self-conscious knowledge and consent of the will. It causes a destruction of sanctifying grace and therefore the supernatural death of the soul. If not remedied by Confession and absolution or, in some extreme circumstances, perfect contrition alone, it will cause a person to be barred from Heaven.²⁸

A venial sin (from the Latin, *venia*, “pardon”) is a less serious transgression, not involving the elements of mortal sin as just outlined. It does not deprive the soul of sanctifying grace or destroy the soul’s ability to effect a cure from within.²⁹ It does not follow, however, that Christians can therefore commit venial sins with impunity. That would be as foolish as a man cutting himself all over his body except at the jugular vein, on the grounds that, since such acts will not *kill* him, they are of little concern.

All of these important distinctions work in harmony to form a consistent

system of salvation theology, or soteriology, which is, in this instance, explicitly grounded in Scripture. Different definitions, premises, and assumptions in many of these areas account for the variant system of soteriology found in Protestantism.

Most Protestants believe in external, or forensic, justification, where righteousness is merely declared, or imputed, by God to the sinner, who remains outwardly unchanged, at least in the beginning.³⁰ For Luther, Calvin, and most evangelical Protestants, sin is essentially defined as unbridled passion, over which the sinner, in a state of total depravity, has no control. Thus, the only hope for redemption is an act of God that operates absolutely independently of man's free choice or free will to do good, a capacity completely lost at the Fall in the Garden of Eden.

Luther thought his most important book was *The Bondage of the Will*, a work devoted to proving these very principles. Man lives and dies in iniquity: thus taught Luther.³¹ Although classic "Reformational" Protestantism most certainly doesn't deny the importance of good works in the Christian life, it regards them as manifestations or results of the necessary imputed justification, rather than as necessities in their own right.³²

In Catholicism, on the other hand, man retains a small measure of free will to choose God and the good. This enables him — by the necessary assistance of God's enabling and preceding grace at every turn — to *cooperate* with God as he sanctifies and saves.³³ In Catholic theology, whoever rejects God and goes to Hell does so of his own volition and free choice,³⁴ whereas in Calvinist Protestant "Reformational" doctrine, God predestines people to Hell from eternity without (ultimately) their own choice being a factor at all (a doctrine known as double predestination).³⁵

Even St. Augustine, contrary to the contentions of many Protestant apologists, never denied human free will as pertains to matters of salvation and damnation,³⁶ although he developed a strong view of predestination, as did the Catholic Church. The key difference relates to the nature and limits of man's free will, and whether God positively decrees souls to reprobation (damnation) or not. Calvinism affirms positive reprobation, while Catholicism vigorously denies it. Likewise, Catholics maintain that Jesus Christ died for all men (Universal Atonement) rather than only for the elect,

those who will ultimately go to Heaven (Limited Atonement), as in the Calvinist schema.³⁷

In Catholic theology, salvation is a lifelong process (Phil. 2:12-13; 3:10-14) begun at Baptism, rather than a one-time event (the Evangelical Protestant experience of “getting saved.”³⁸ The Protestant “assurance” of instantaneous salvation and declaratory justification does not take into account the biblical data in its totality, as will be shown.

We can readily see how the issue of justification played a central role in the religious controversies and division of the sixteenth century and the rise of Protestantism. Yet — thankfully — there are also many similarities in the two broad theological positions that are helpful to recognize, in the spirit of openness, Christian unity, and ecumenism.

Simply put, both sides agree that faith is absolutely necessary for salvation and that we are clearly commanded by God to do good works. The Anglican C. S. Lewis once wryly remarked that an emphasis on either faith or works to the exclusion of the other was like thinking that one blade in a pair of scissors was more necessary than the other. The tendency in practice is for Catholics to minimize the first aspect and Protestants the second. Likewise, each side often thinks that the other denies one of these principles.

In fact, however, at the level of creeds, catechisms, confessions, and councils, both sides completely concur on these two maxims. The split comes over the precise nature of the relationship of faith and works to each other and to justification and salvation. We must not minimize theological divisions, nor should we exaggerate them. The first approach flows from the duty of honesty; the second from the demands of charity and understanding among Christians in the Body of Christ.

New Testament teaching on justification and salvation

Matthew 5:20: “For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven.”

Our Lord here shows us that it is necessary not only to believe in him, but also to keep all the Commandments (as the Pharisees were scrupulous in their observance of Mosaic Law). This standard indicates the very high level of perfection to which we are called. “Faith alone” is refuted.

Matthew 7:16-27: “You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? So every sound tree bears good fruit; but the bad tree bears evil fruit. A sound tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will know them by their fruits. Not every one who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in Heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers.’ Everyone, then, who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine, and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it.”

Jesus puts salvation into very practical terms. He reiterates the teaching of Matthew 5:20 by emphasizing acts of obedience, as opposed to mere verbal proclamations or head knowledge. Even some miraculous works are not necessarily under his superintendence.

A similar dynamic is also present in Matthew 25:31-46, the great scene of the separation of sheep and goats, where Christ continually makes the works of faith the central criterion of judgment. And again in Luke 18:18-25, where the rich young ruler asked Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life, Jesus asks if he has kept the Commandments. Upon finding out that he has, he commands him to sell all his possessions and give the money to the poor. Jesus was quite an incompetent missionary, according to the pragmatic evangelistic techniques and criteria for “success” which prevail among many

of today's Evangelicals.

Nothing whatsoever is spoken about faith alone in any of these passages, as would be rightfully expected if Luther were correct about the nature of saving faith. All Christians agree that a person living unrighteously is in great danger. Catholics say that such a one has lost the state of grace through mortal sin, whereas most Evangelicals contend that they were likely never saved at all. In any event, the actual outcome is the same in both cases if the sinning persists: hellfire.

Matthew 16:27: “For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay every man for what he has done.”

Cardinal Newman comments:

Faith has a certain prerogative of dignity under the Gospel. At the same time, we must never forget that the more usual mode of doctrine both with Christ and His Apostles is to refer our acceptance to obedience to the commandments, not to faith. . . .

There are multitudes who would avow with confidence and exultation that they put obedience only in the second place in their religious scheme, as if it were rather a necessary consequence of faith than requiring a direct attention for its own sake; a something subordinate to it, rather than connatural and contemporaneous with it. . . .

These declarations,^{[39](#)} so solemnly, so repeatedly made, must hold good in their plain and obvious sense, and may not be infringed or superseded.^{[40](#)}

Luke 14:13-14: “But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”

The idea here appears to be the same one expressed by our Lord in Matthew 16:27: that of differential rewards in Heaven commensurate with deeds done in his grace and with heartfelt devotion.

John 1:29: “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”

Here we see that sins are obliterated, not merely “covered over.” There are many other passages in the same vein:

2 Samuel 12:13: “The Lord also has put away your sin.”

1 Chronicles 21:8: “Take away the iniquity of thy servant.”

Psalms 51:2, 7, 9-10: “Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! . . . Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. . . . Blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.”

Psalms 103:12: “As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.”

Isaiah 43:25: “I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake.”

Isaiah 44:22: “I have swept away your transgressions like a cloud, and your sins like mist, for I have redeemed you.”

Ezekiel 37:23: “I . . . will cleanse them.”

Acts 3:19: “Repent, therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out.”

1 John 1:7: “The blood of Jesus, his son, cleanses us from all sin.”

1 John 1:9: “He is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

The Greek word for “blotted out” in Acts 3:19, *exalipho*, is used in Revelation 3:5, where names from the book of life are blotted out — obviously an obliteration, with the most dire consequences. In Revelation 7:17 and 21:4, the word has reference to God’s wiping away tears in Heaven: again, clearly an absolute act of removal. Therefore, the notion that the above

passages are only metaphorical or symbolic would appear to be a strained and implausible interpretation. The language is so definite as to leave no doubt: sin is taken away, put away, swept away, washed, purged, cleansed, blotted out, or removed.

Likewise, the word for “cleanse” in 1 John 1:7, 9 is *katharizo*, which is used to describe the cleansing of lepers throughout the Gospels (e.g., Matt. 8:3, 11:5; Mark 1:42; Luke 7:22). This is indisputably an “infused” cleansing, rather than an “imputed” one. Why should God settle for anything less when it comes to our sin and justification?

To be fair, Protestants stress this actual sanctification, as we have already acknowledged, but in separating it in principle, and abstractly, from justification and the “working out” of one’s salvation, they have constructed yet another unnecessary dichotomy, the net result of which has been a lessening of the vital role of works, which thereby tend to be regarded as far less compulsory, to the detriment of holiness.

John 3:36: “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him.”

The Greek word for “believes” is *pistuo*, and the Greek for “does not obey” is *apitheo*. There is a parallelism in this verse, whereby *belief* and *obedience* are essentially identical. When all is said and done, believing in Christ is obeying him. This ought to be kept in mind by Protestant evangelists and pastors who urge penitents to “believe in Christ,” “accept Christ,” etc. To disobey Christ is to be subject to the wrath of God. Thus, again, we are faced with the inescapable necessity of good works — wrought by God’s grace, and done in the spirit of charity — for the purpose and end of ultimate salvation, holiness, and communion with God.

St. Peter, in 1 Peter 2:7, uses the same parallelism, with the same two identical Greek words (*believe/disobedient* in KJV). St. Paul uses *apitheo* with regard to disobedience to parents in Romans 1:30 and 2 Timothy 3:2, and in a more general sense (describing sinners) in Titus 1:16 and 3:3. Obviously, no one disbelieves in the existence of his parents. St. Paul is speaking of disobeying parents’ commands. In the same sense, such disobedience (not mere lack of faith) is said to be the basis of the loss of

eternal life in John 3:36.

To speculate further, if it be granted that *pistuo* (“believe”) is roughly identical to “obeying,” as it indisputably is in John 3:36, by simple deduction, then its use elsewhere is also much more commensurate with the Catholic view of infused justification rather than the more abstract, extrinsic, and forensic Protestant view; for example, the “classic” Protestant evangelistic verse John 3:16, Jesus’ constant demand to believe in him in John 5 through 10, and St. Paul’s oft-cited salvific exhortations in Romans 1:16, 4:24, 9:33, and 10:9, generally thought to be irrefutable proofs of the Protestant viewpoint on saving faith.

John 6:27-29: “Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you; for on him has God the Father set his seal. Then said they to him, ‘What must we do, to be doing the works of God?’ Jesus answered them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.’ ”

In verses 28 and 29, *working* and *belief* in Christ are equated, much like *obedience* and *belief* in John 3:36. In the marvelous phrase “doing the works of God,” we see that our works and God’s are intertwined if indeed we are doing his will. This is the Catholic viewpoint: an organic connection of both faith with works, and God’s unmerited grace coupled with our cooperation and obedience. Our Lord constantly alludes to the related ideas of *reward* and *merit*, which are complementary: Matthew 5:11-12, 6:3, 18, 10:42, 12:36-37, 25:14-30; Luke 6:35, 38; 12:33. St. Paul, using the same word for “works” (*ergon*), speaks in Acts 26:20 of the process of repenting, turning to God, and doing deeds worthy of their repentance. In other words, they will thus prove their repentance by their deeds.

Acts 10:31: “Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms have been remembered before God.”

Acts 10:35: “But in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.”

The Gentile Cornelius is told by an angel that his alms (works done in faith) put him in good stead with God vis-à-vis becoming a Christian. Later, St.

Peter reiterates this by stating that whoever “fears him and does what is right” is accepted by God; that is, both faith and allegiance must be present. The ongoing principle of the organic closeness of faith and works is again evident.

Acts 22:16: “ ‘And now, why do you wait? Rise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on his name.’ ”

Cardinal Newman comments on this verse:

A man may . . . [think] that in St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans nothing is said about channels and instruments; that faith is represented as the sole medium of justification. . . . Yet from other parts of the history, we learn . . . that an especial revelation was made to Ananias, lest Saul should go without Baptism; and that, so far from his being justified immediately on his faith, he was bid not to tarry, but “to arise and be baptized, and *to wash away his sins....*”

Here, then, we have a clear instance in St. Paul’s case, that there are priestly services between the soul and God, even under the Gospel; that though Christ has purchased inestimable blessings for our race, yet that it is still necessary ever to apply them to individuals by visible means.⁴¹

The Protestant has difficulty explaining this passage, for it is St. Paul’s own recounting of his odyssey as a newly “born-again” Christian. We have here the Catholic doctrine of (sacramental) sanctification/justification, in which sins are actually removed. The phraseology “wash away your sins” is reminiscent of Psalm 51:2, 7; 1 John 1:7, 9; and similar texts dealing with infused justification, dealt with earlier. We note also a similarity to St. Peter’s first sermon in the Upper Room upon being filled with the Holy Spirit:

Acts 2:38: “Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

According to the standard Evangelical soteriology, the apostle Paul would have been instantly “justified” at the Damascus-road experience when he first converted (almost involuntarily!) to Christ (Acts 9:1-9). Thus, his sins would

have been “covered over” and righteousness imputed to him at that point. If so, why would St. Paul use this terminology of washing away sins at Baptism in a merely symbolic sense (as they assert), since it would be superfluous? The reasonable alternative, especially given the evidence of other related scriptures, is that St. Paul was speaking literally, not symbolically.

There is even more remarkable proof of this: The Greek word for “wash away” in Acts 22:16 is *apolouo*. It only appears one other time in the Bible, also in St. Paul’s writing:

1 Corinthians 6:11: “And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.”

There is much here that indicates the Catholic view of the doctrines under present consideration: washing (baptismal regeneration), sanctification, justification, and even the Holy Spirit (and the Trinity). Protestant “dogma” attempts to separate all four elements, to more or less degrees. Granted, it isn’t logically certain that the three acts or processes are equivalent in this particular text, but at any rate, St. Paul is surely associating them together closely, as in Catholic teaching.

Baptism and regeneration are often correlated in Scripture: Jesus says we must be “born of water and the Spirit” to enter God’s kingdom (John 3:5). Many Protestants rather desperately claim that the water refers to childbirth! St. Peter informs us that “Baptism . . . now saves you” (1 Pet. 3:21). St. Paul writes that “He saved us . . . by the washing of regeneration” (Titus 3:5) and equates Baptism with “put[ting] on Christ” (Gal. 3:27). Catholics do not hold that Baptism alone is sufficient for eternal salvation (assuming a person lives for a while after it) and interpret these verses in harmony with the rest of the biblical teaching of salvation as a lifelong process of perseverance. On the other hand, the Protestant must admit that there is definitely more to these verses than mere symbolism. We do indeed see here baptismal regeneration, by which the newly baptized initiate is sanctified and made holy — all of which is consistent with infused justification.

St. Paul and justification

Al Kresta, the host of a Catholic talk-radio show⁴² and a former nondenominational pastor, a man thoroughly acquainted with Protestant thinking on justification, makes some very cogent observations about St. Paul's theology of salvation:

Unlike the modern Evangelical-Protestant revivalistic preaching tradition, the Apostle Paul was not preoccupied with his acceptance as a sinner before a holy and righteous God. That was Luther's crisis. Protestants have tended to read Paul through the lens of Luther's experience.

1.... Luther said he feared God but clung to the Apostle Paul. All the constitutive elements of the classic Luther-type experience, however, are missing in both the experience and the thought of the Apostle.

Unlike Luther, Paul was not preoccupied with his guilt, seeking reassurance of a gracious God. He was rather robust of conscience, even given to boasting, untroubled about whether God was gracious or not [Phil. 3:4 ff.; 2 Cor. 10, 11]. He knew God was gracious. He never pleads either with Jews or Gentiles to *feel* an anguished conscience and then receive release from that anguish in a message of forgiveness. . . . Paul's burden is not to "bring people under conviction of sin," as in revival services. Forgiveness is simply a matter of fact.

When Paul speaks of himself as a serious sinner, it is . . . very specifically because . . . he had persecuted the Church and missed God's new move — opening the covenant community to the Gentiles (1 Cor. 15:9-10; Eph. 3:8; Gal. 1:13-16; 1 Tim. 1:13-15).

What is now set right in his life is not that he is no longer trying to work his way to Heaven, abandons self-exertion, and now trusts Christ; it is rather that he now sees that God has inexplicably chosen him to reveal this new and more inclusive covenant community made up of Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2:11-3:6). . . .

2. Paul's arguments against works of the law are not fundamentally arguments against human participation in or human cooperation with the saving purposes of God, but arguments against Judaistic pride that sought to define membership in the covenant community by reference to Jewish

marks of identity, such as circumcision, Sabbath-keeping, etc. and not fundamentally faith in Jesus as Messiah. . . .⁴³

3. Even in Paul, justification cannot be isolated from the other images he employs to describe God's salvific activity toward us. While righteousness/justice/justification is the primary way the Apostle describes what God does for us in Christ, it is complemented by other images which express aspects of God's activity in nonlegal terminology that refers to personal and corporate transformation. Paul recognized that Christ had "once for all" (Rom. 6:10) died to sin and had justified human beings (Gal. 2:16; Rom. 3:26-28, 4:25, 5:18), but he freely described what this involves under such other images as:

- Salvation (2 Cor. 7:10; Rom. 1:16, 10:10, 13:11);
- Expiation of sins (Rom. 3:25);
- Redemption of sinners (1 Cor. 1:30; Rom. 3:24, 8:32);
- Reconciliation of sinners to God (2 Cor. 5:18-20; Rom. 5:10-11, 11:15);
- Adoption into the family of God (Gal. 4:5; Rom. 8:15, 23);
- Sanctification (1 Cor. 1:2, 30; 6:11);
- Freedom (Gal. 5:1,13; Rom. 8:1-2, 21);
- Transformation (2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 12:20);
- Glorification (2 Cor. 3:10; Rom. 8:30);
- New Creation (Gal. 6:15; 2 Cor. 5:17; cf. 1 Cor. 15:45).

Protestants see justification, sanctification, and glorification as three successive phases of salvation — related, but essentially distinct. Catholics see them as three aspects of the same process begun at the same moment in time. . . .

A Catholic understanding of justification is that it is the glorious voice of the Lord declaring us to be righteous. The word of the Lord, however, is a creative word. It is powerful enough to effect what it says. God's word is not a mere statement; it will not return to him void, but will accomplish that which he pleases. When God declares a man just, he makes him just (cf. Isa. 44:22; Ps. 32:5, 51:3 ff.). . . . Our righteousness is, so to speak, the imprint upon us of the righteousness of Another.⁴⁴

Romans 2:5-13: "But by your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up

wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. For he will render to every man according to his works: To those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are factious and do not obey the truth, but obey wickedness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality. All who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified."

Judgment, according to St. Paul in his quintessential treatise on salvational theology, his letter to the Romans, is according to works, just as Christ also explicitly taught. This is a theme that runs through St. Paul's writings (for example, 1 Cor. 3:13, 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:10; Gal. 6:7-9; Col. 3:23-25). That this is the case is admitted even by staunchly Reformed evangelical theologians, such as G. C. Berkouwer.⁴⁵

This passage easily synthesizes with Catholic soteriology, but is shockingly dissimilar to Protestant thought. To summarize: The concept of "demerits" is present (verse 5). Differential rewards for works (by implication, differential "merit") exist (verse 6). Eternal life is correlated with well-doing (verses 7, 10). Divine wrath is due to disobedience (verses 8, 9). Obedient doers of the law shall be justified (verse 13; a striking similarity to James 1:22-23; 2:24).

The theme of obeying the gospel, or the obedience of faith, is also common in St. Paul's writings (for example, Rom. 1:5, 6:17, 10:16, 15:18-19, 16:25-26; 2 Thess. 1:8; cf. Acts 6:7; Heb. 11:8).

Romans 3:28: "For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law."

Hartmann Grisar, the great Jesuit scholar and biographer of Luther, asserts:

Here he merely excludes the works "of the law," i.e., according to the context such works as do not rest on faith but precede faith, whether the

purely outward works of the Mosaic ceremonial law, or other natural works done apart from, or before, Christ.⁴⁶

This is the verse to which Luther, with no basis in the Greek text, arbitrarily added the word *alone* after the word *faith* in his German translation, in order to bolster his novel doctrine of *sola fide*. The notion of “faith alone” does, however, occur in the Bible twice, in James 2:17 and 2:24, where it is condemned. It comes as no surprise, then, to learn that Luther described the book of James as an “epistle of straw” and regarded it as an inferior, second-tier book of the New Testament (and in fact nearly threw it out altogether).

Romans 5:17-19: “If, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. Then as one man’s trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man’s act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man’s obedience many will be made righteous.”

It seems unlikely, in light of the clear parallelism in verse 19 (“made sinners . . . made righteous”) that the righteousness is merely imputed, since all agree that Original Sin is actual. Likewise, verse 17 gives us a clue as to St. Paul’s meaning, since it refers to a received “abundance of grace” and “the gift of righteousness” — phrases that are more in line with infused justification.

1 Corinthians 3:8-9: “Each shall receive his wages according to his labor. For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building.”

1 Corinthians 15:10: “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me” (see also 1 Cor. 15:58; Gal. 5:6, 6:7-9).

St. Paul again regards faith and the human cooperation of works (labor) as two sides of the same coin, both proceeding from grace. Elsewhere, the apostle writes of the “works of faith” and related concepts (1 Thess. 1:3; 2 Thess. 1:11; Titus 1:15-16). Faith and works are not at all incompatible in all these Pauline passages. Salvation is described as a struggle, a process, a goal

— not merely an abstract, past, instantaneous event.

As we labor faithfully as Jesus' disciples, we store up corresponding rewards (1 Cor. 3:8; cf. 1 Tim. 6:18-19): the idea of merit (which most Protestants deny). It is by virtue of our union with our Lord Jesus Christ that our actions — worthless in and of themselves — become meritorious.

2 Corinthians 5:17: “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

The curious thing here (for the Protestant) is the seemingly instantaneous change of sanctification, which would accompany justification. If “all things are new” (as in the KJV), how does this square with mere declaratory, forensic, extrinsic justification? The whole drift of the passage seems to be actual transformation in the person now in Christ, whereas in Protestant justification, only the individual's “legal” standing with God is changed. In fact, justification and sanctification are intimately related aspects of our ultimate salvation.

Ephesians 2:8-10: “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God — not because of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

The first portion of this passage (2:8-9) is one of the most frequently used biblical citations in Protestant evangelistic circles. What is noteworthy upon reflection is how verse 10 clarifies the two preceding verses. When it is included in proper context, we see that works are not antithetical to faith, but rather, the necessary “outworking” of it. In verses 8 and 9, St. Paul is stressing the causal primacy of grace and faith, and the futility of mere human works not preceded by grace. But in verse 10 he teaches that good works ordained by God, and always proceeding from His grace, are equally part of salvation and justification. The whole passage is more in accord with Catholic both-and thinking than with the Protestant either-or dichotomous perspective.

Philippians 2:12-13: “Work out your own salvation with fear and

trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”

Cardinal Newman elaborates:

In truth, the two doctrines of the sovereign and overruling power of divine grace, and man’s power of resistance, need not at all interfere with each other. They lie in different provinces, and are (as it were) incommensurables. Thus St. Paul evidently accounted them; else he could not have introduced the text in question with the exhortation, “Work out or accomplish your own salvation with fear and trembling,” for it is God which worketh or acts in you. So far was he from thinking man’s distinct working inconsistent with God’s continual aiding, that he assigns the knowledge of the latter as an encouragement to the former. . . .

It is quite certain that a modern Predestinarian never could have written such a sentence [as Phil. 2:12-13].⁴⁷

Titus 3:5-8: “He saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life. . . . Those who have believed in God may be careful to apply themselves to good deeds; these are excellent and profitable to men.”

Here St. Paul refers to Baptism (verse 5: “washing of regeneration”) and says we are saved in the sense of initial justification. That this is a conditional security, we have seen from several other passages already considered, and more to come. Assuming for the sake of argument that the salvation here spoken of is permanent and “eternally secure,” the Evangelical would still have to extricate himself from the position of baptismal regeneration, which most Protestants deny vehemently. Once again, St. Paul utilizes a beautifully symmetrical argument, such as in Philippians 2:12-13 and Ephesians 2:8-10, balancing complementary aspects (which are often unnecessarily dichotomized by Protestantism).

Most interesting is the use of *deeds* in two different senses in the same

passage. In verse 5, he teaches that we cannot be saved by purely human works, preceding the grace of God (that is, the heresy of Pelagianism is denied). But in verse 8, he urges in very strong terms that good deeds are profitable, as indeed he often stresses elsewhere in several ways.

Catholics need not minimize the aspects of St. Paul's teaching that deal with human responsibility, nor set his teaching on works against his supposed teaching on extrinsic justification, nor his predestinarian texts against his numerous exhortations of vigilance and watchfulness concerning one's own state of friendship with God, nor oppose him to St. James or our Lord Jesus, etc. When the *whole* teaching of the Bible is taken into consideration (as objectively as humanly possible), the synthesis arrived at will be seen to be not unlike that which has been maintained in the Catholic Church, with increasing fullness as time goes on.

Hebrews 5:9: "And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him" (see also Heb. 6:9-10; 10:24).

Obviously, obedience is regarded here as essential for salvation. There is no sense whatsoever in this passage of a "faith alone" viewpoint, which somehow puts sanctification in a separate category, not necessary for salvation.

James 1:22: "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."

James 2:14-26: "What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but has not works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe — and shudder. Do you want to be shown, you foolish fellow, that faith apart from works is barren? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by works, and the scripture

was fulfilled which says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness’; and he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. And in the same way was not also Rahab the harlot justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so faith apart from works is dead” (see also Ps. 106:30-31; James 1:23-27).

When St. James uses the phrase “faith alone,” he is speaking in the sense of mere intellectual assent to Christianity. St. Paul does not contradict St. James, as Luther thought, since he uses the word *faith* in the broader sense of a person’s complete allegiance to God with both mind and will. But St. James also uses the word in the broader sense, as he develops his argument (“I by my works will show you my faith”).

St. James is referring to that portion of justification which occurs after the initial manifestation (or what Evangelicals would specify strictly as sanctification). There is neither a contradiction between St. Paul and St. James, nor in both apostles’ exposition of faith and works as organically united. The real contradiction is the one devised by Luther, whereby things that are bound together in Scripture (as we have clearly seen above) are arbitrarily separated, to the detriment of a logically and theologically consistent exegesis.

“Faith alone,” or *sola fide*, could have no more indisputable and explicit refutation than this passage. Yet much more in Scripture also opposes it.

Cardinal Newman reiterates this point:

On the whole, then, salvation is both by faith and by works. St. James says, not *dead* faith, and St. Paul, not *dead* works. St. James, “not by faith *only*,” for that *would* be dead faith; St. Paul, “not by works *only*,” for such *would* be dead works. Faith alone can make works living; works alone can make faith living. Take away either, and you take away both — he alone has faith who has works — he alone has works who has faith.⁴⁸

1 Peter 1:2: “. . . chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood . .

.”

This is another remarkable verse, which incorporates so many elements together: initial justification and the resulting sanctification and obedience. Even the Trinity is implied. A Catholic motto in interpreting the Bible might be: “What therefore God [Scripture] has joined together, let no man put asunder” (Matt. 19:6).

1 Peter 1:17: “. . . who judges each one impartially according to his deeds . . .”

St. Peter teaches the same concept of differential reward found in the Gospels and the Pauline epistles.

2 Peter 1:10: “Therefore, brethren, be the more zealous to confirm your call and election, for if you do this you will never fall.”

St. Peter regards salvation as a process that requires diligence. The word *if* speaks volumes against “eternal security.” The coexistence of human exertion (“zealous to confirm”) and divine prerogative (“call and election”) are especially noteworthy.

Revelation 22:12: “Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense, to repay everyone for what he has done.”

Our Lord Jesus reiterates in the revelation to St. John his same teaching of differential reward, and by extension, the possibility of human merit though grace.

Assurance of instant salvation/salvation as a process

1 Corinthians 9:27: “But I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.”

1 Corinthians 10:12: “Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.”

Galatians 5:1, 4: “Stand fast, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. . . . You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace.”

Philippians 3:11-14: “. . . that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own. . . . I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

1 Timothy 4:1: “Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the Faith by giving heed to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.”

1 Timothy 5:15: “For some have already strayed after Satan.”

Hebrews 3:12-14: “Take care, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day . . . that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we share in Christ, if only we hold our first confidence firm to the end.”

Hebrews 6:4-6: “For it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God, and the powers of the age to come, if they then commit apostasy.”

2 Peter 2:15, 20-21: “Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray; they have followed the way of Balaam. . . . For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overpowered, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than, after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them” (see also 1 Sam. 11:6, 18:11-12; Ezek. 18:24, 33:12-13, 18; Gal. 4:9; Col. 1:23; Heb. 6:11-12, 10:23, 26, 29, 36, 39, 12:15; Rev. 2:4-5).

The Second Council of Orange (529) and the Council of Trent (1545-1563) on the doctrine of justification

No theologian or Christian figure of any note believed in forensic, imputed justification until Luther and Calvin came onto the scene of Church history in the sixteenth century. It is simply implausible and incredible (and unbiblical: Matt. 16:18; John 14:26) to think that a theological concept considered so absolutely crucial by Protestants could have been lost immediately after the Apostles and for fifteen centuries thereafter.

The Second Council of Orange in 529⁴⁹ condemned the heresies of Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism (which St. Augustine had already done a century earlier). Pelagianism denied Original Sin and regarded grace as within man's natural capacities. Semi-Pelagianism made man primarily responsible for his own salvation and denigrated the necessity of God's enabling grace.

The council made many binding definitions of grace and salvation that may be quite surprising to many Protestants who are wont to accuse the Catholic Church of the same heresies that she anathematized fourteen centuries ago. The Catholic Church fully agrees with Holy Scripture that faith, the subjective condition of justification, is a gift of God (Eph. 2:8 ff.; John 6:66; Heb. 12:12; Phil. 1:6, 1:29; 1 Cor. 4:7). This was the emphasis of Second Orange. Several of its more important decrees follow:

Canon 3: "If anyone says that the grace of God can be conferred in answer to man's petition, but that the petition itself is not due to the action of grace, he contradicts the prophet Isaiah and the Apostle, who both say: 'I was found by them that did not seek me, I appeared openly to them that ask not after me' " (Rom. 10:20; Isa. 15:1).

Canon 4: "If anyone contends that God waits for our will so we may be cleansed from sin — and does not admit that the very fact that we even will to be cleansed comes in us by the infusion and work of the Holy Spirit, he resists the same Holy Spirit."

Canon 5: "If anybody says that the . . . beginning of Faith and the Act of

Faith itself . . . is in us naturally and not by a gift of grace that is by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, he is opposed to Apostolic teaching.”

Canon 6: “If anyone says that God has mercy on us when, without his grace, we believe, will, desire, strive, work, watch, study, ask, seek, knock, and does not confess that we believe, will, and are enabled to do all this in the way we ought, by the infusion and inspiration of the Holy Spirit within us; or makes the help of grace depend on the humility or obedience of man, rather than ascribing such humility and obedience to the free gift of grace; he goes counter to the Apostle, who says, ‘What hast thou that thou hast not received?’ and ‘By the grace of God I am what I am’ (1 Cor. 4:7 and 15:10).”

Canon 7: “If anyone asserts that we can, by our natural powers, think as we ought, or choose any good pertaining to the salvation of eternal life, that is, consent to salvation or to the message of the Gospel, without the illumination and inspiration of the Holy Spirit . . . he is misled by a heretical spirit, not understanding what the voice of God says in the Gospel, ‘Without me you can do nothing’ (John 15:5), nor the words of the Apostle, ‘Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God’ (2 Cor. 3:5).”

Canon 9: “As often as we do good, God operates in us and with us, so that we may operate.”

Canon 13: “Free will, weakened in the person of the first man, can be repaired only by the grace of Baptism. . . .” (cites John 8:36).

Canon 20: “Man does no good except that which God brings about that man performs. . . .”

Canon 25: “In a word, to love God is a gift of God. He, yet unloved, loves us and gave us the power to love. . . . Through the sin of the first man, the free will is so weakened and warped, that no one thereafter can either love God as he ought, or believe in God, or do good for the sake of God, unless moved, previously, by the grace of the divine mercy. . . . In every good work that we do, it is not we who have the initiative, aided, subsequently, by the mercy of God, but that he begins by inspiring faith and love towards

him, without any prior merit of ours.”

The Council of Trent (1545-1563) reiterated the decrees of a thousand years earlier, developing them further, and emphasizing man’s free will, but adding nothing essential. Some of the more notable portions of the *Decree on Justification* (January 13, 1547) follow:

Chapter 5: “The beginning of the said justification is to be derived from the prevenient grace of God through Jesus Christ; that is to say, from His vocation, whereby, without any merits existing on their parts, they are called; that so they who by sins were alienated from God may be disposed through His quickening and assisting grace to convert themselves to their own justification by freely assenting to and cooperating with that said grace: in such sort that, while God touches the heart of man by the illumination of the Holy Ghost, neither is man himself utterly without doing anything while he receives that inspiration, for as much as he is also able to reject it; yet he is not able, by his own free-will, without the grace of God, to move himself unto justice in His sight.”

Canon 2: “If anyone saith that man may be justified before God by his own works, whether done through the teaching of human nature or that of the law, without the grace of God through Jesus Christ; let him be anathema.”⁵⁰

Canon 4: “If anyone saith that man’s free will, moved and excited by God, by assenting to God exciting and calling, no wise cooperates towards disposing and preparing itself for obtaining the grace of justification; that it cannot refuse its consent, if it would, but that, as something inanimate, it does nothing whatever and is merely passive; let him be anathema.”

Canon 6: “If anyone saith that it is not in man’s power to make his ways evil, but that the works that are evil God worketh as well as those that are good, not permissibly only, but properly and of Himself, in such wise that the treason of Judas is no less His own proper work than the vocation of Paul; let him be anathema.”

Canon 9: “If anyone saith that men are justified, either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ or by the sole remission of sins, to the

exclusion of the grace and the charity which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Ghost and is inherent in them; or even that the grace, whereby we are justified, is only the favor of God; let him be anathema.”

Canon 24: “If anyone saith that the justice received is not preserved and also increased before God through good works; but that the said works are merely the fruits and signs of justification obtained, but not a cause of the increase thereof; let him be anathema.”

Canon 26: “If anyone saith that the just ought not, for their good works done in God, to expect and hope for an eternal recompense from God, through His mercy and the merit of Jesus Christ, if so be that they persevere to the end in well-doing and in keeping the commandments; let him be anathema.”

Canon 27: “If anyone saith that there is no mortal sin but that of infidelity (unbelief); or that grace once received is not lost by any other sin, however grievous and enormous, save by that of infidelity; let him be anathema.”

Canon 30: “If anyone saith that, after the grace of justification has been received, to every penitent sinner the guilt is remitted, and the debt of eternal punishment is blotted out in such wise that there remains not any debt of temporal punishment to be discharged either in this world, or in the next in Purgatory, before the entrance to the Kingdom of Heaven can be opened (to him); let him be anathema.”

In the *Decree on Justification* (chs. 9, 12, 15), Trent also rejects classic Protestantism’s notion of subjective absolute assurance of salvation:

But, although it is necessary to believe that sins neither are remitted, nor ever were remitted save gratuitously by the mercy of God for Christ’s sake, yet it is not to be said that sins are forgiven, or have been forgiven, to anyone who boasts of his confidence and certainty of the remission of sins, and rests on that alone; seeing that it may exist, yea, does in our day exist, amongst heretics and schismatics; and with great vehemence is this vain confidence, and one alien from all godliness, preached up in opposition to the Catholic Church. But neither is this to be asserted, that they who are truly justified must needs, without any doubting whatever, settle within

themselves that they are justified, and that no one is absolved from sins and justified but he that believes for certain that he is absolved and justified; and that absolution and justification are effected by this faith alone; as though whoso has not this belief doubts of the promises of God and of the efficacy of the death and resurrection of Christ. For even as no pious person ought to doubt of the mercy of God, of the merit of Christ, and of the virtue and efficacy of the sacraments, even so each one, when he regards himself and his own weakness and indisposition, may have fear and apprehension touching his own grace; seeing that no one can know with a certainty of faith, which cannot be subject to error, that he has obtained the grace of God.

No one, moreover, so long as he is in this mortal life, ought so far to presume as regards the secret mystery of divine predestination as to determine for certain that he is assuredly in the number of the predestinate; as if it were true that he that is justified either cannot sin anymore, or, if he do sin, that he ought to promise himself an assured repentance; for except by special revelation it cannot be known whom God hath chosen unto Himself.

. . . It is to be maintained that the received grace of justification is lost not only by infidelity, whereby even faith itself is lost, but also by any other mortal sin whatever, though faith be not lost. . . .

Chapter Three

Development of Doctrine

“He will teach you”

George Salmon, an able and zealous Anglican apologist of the last century, analyzed development of doctrine in the following fashion:

An unlearned Protestant perceives that the doctrine of Rome is not the doctrine of the Bible. A learned Protestant adds that neither is it the doctrine of the primitive Church. . . . It is at least owned that the doctrine of Rome is as unlike that of early times as an oak is unlike an acorn, or a butterfly like a caterpillar. . . . The only question remaining is whether that unlikeness is absolutely inconsistent with substantial identity. In other words, it is owned that there has been a change, and the question is whether we are to call it development or corruption. . . .⁵¹

Salmon frames the debate correctly. Catholics maintain that the historical growth of doctrine throughout Church history is a consistent development (which is to be expected), and not a corruption of scriptural truth (or, more specifically, the “deposit of Faith,” as a Catholic would put it). Contrary to Salmon’s contentions, Catholics believe their doctrines are grounded both in the Bible and in the early Church.

The concept of development of doctrine provides the key for understanding why the Catholic Church today often appears on the surface as fundamentally different from the early Church. Without it, the doctrinal and historical outlook of Catholicism will, in most cases, be too difficult to comprehend fully for most Evangelicals, who have quite different presuppositions in this regard. Thoughtful and ecumenical Protestants owe it to themselves to ponder this indispensable notion before unduly criticizing the allegedly “unbiblical excesses” of Catholicism.

“Development of doctrine” is defined by Catholics as the increase in understanding — by means of the teaching of the Holy Spirit, prayer,

theological study, and the reflection of the Body of Christ as a whole — of Christian doctrines that originated from the Lord Jesus himself and which have been passed down through the Apostles, the Fathers, the councils, and the Catholic Church in general.⁵² The meaning of doctrines unfolds over time, but the essence or substance of any particular doctrine remains unchanged. Our extent of knowledge or subjective grasp of any given dogma is what changes. Doctrines thus achieve more clarity and depth as well as certitude in the minds and hearts of believers.⁵³ The Bible is not absolutely clear, even in the “essentials,” and requires the developing interpretive wisdom of the Church.

The Catholic Church maintains that no new public revelation has been received by the Church since the time of the Apostles,⁵⁴ and “private revelations” such as Marian apparitions are not at all binding on the faithful, even though many of these have been recognized by the Church as worthy of pious belief.⁵⁵

The description of the Christian Church as the “Body of Christ” in the Bible (e.g., Eph. 1:22-23) presupposes the ability to grow actively. The Church, according to many Protestants, resembles a statue more than a living organism. Once the biblical metaphor is consistently applied, it also makes no sense to say that growth (development) stopped in the third, fourth, or fifth century or at some other arbitrary point.

Doctrines agreed upon by virtually all Christians develop, too. The doctrine of the divinity of Jesus Christ was not formally defined until the Council of Nicaea in 325, and the divinity of the Holy Spirit was proclaimed at the Council of Constantinople in 381. The dogma of the two natures of Christ (God and man) was made official at the Council of Chalcedon in 451. We’ve already seen how the Canon of the New Testament was also very much a “developing doctrine,” finalized only in 397. Original Sin was a slowly developed belief. Many other examples could be brought forth.

Why should Protestants accept these authoritative verdicts, but reject similar proclamations on Church government, the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, Mary, the papacy, Purgatory, priestly absolution, baptismal regeneration, the Sacrifice of the Mass, the intercession of the saints, and so forth? If the answer is that these beliefs are “not biblical,” then it must be

explained why Protestants disagree among themselves on virtually every “minor” and even “major” Christian doctrine (see Appendix One).

Corruption can just as easily consist of subtraction as addition. An automobile might be deemed corrupt if it had only half its spark plugs, watered-down gas, no rear brakes, one headlight, one quart of oil, and so forth. Thus, Protestantism’s charges against Catholic “corruption,” if closely scrutinized, often come back to incriminate itself with at least equal force.

The early Church, although it was obviously primitive and undeveloped, nevertheless looks like a small Catholic plant rather than a Protestant statue, whole and entire. This can be ascertained fairly easily by examining the history of doctrines.

If the early Church were Protestant in doctrinal outlook, such a Church went off the rails so astonishingly fast that such an explanation must be discarded as woefully inadequate to account for the facts of history. Furthermore, if a massive defection and apostasy took place, where was the outcry and protest from the “pure” Christian believers? We find no such thing in the historical records.

Another recurrent theme of doctrinal development throughout Church history has been a rapid increase in understanding due to the attacks of heretics who question various Christian doctrines. St. Augustine elaborates:

While the hot restlessness of heretics stirs up questions about many things belonging to the Catholic Faith, in order to provide a defense against these heretics, we are obliged to study the points questioned more diligently, to understand them more clearly . . . and thus the question raised by the adversary becomes the occasion of instruction.⁵⁶

There are many things that lay hidden in the Scriptures, and when heretics were cut off, they vexed the Church of God with disputes; then the hidden things were brought to light, and the will of God was made known.⁵⁷

Obviously, then, if St. Augustine held such a view in the fifth century, development is no new “Romish” corruption of recent times. It has been present in the Church from the very beginning. Nor is it unique to Catholics.

For instance, C. S. Lewis expressly affirmed it,⁵⁸ as does renowned Lutheran (more recently, Orthodox) historian of theology Jaroslav Pelikan⁵⁹ and many other Protestants. Therefore, we are left with the task of distinguishing a true development from a corruption, as Salmon stated.

For this endeavor, we must consult Cardinal Newman, who is perhaps best known for his masterpiece *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*,⁶⁰ which he completed as an Anglican in 1845, right before his conversion to Catholicism, basically convincing himself by means of rigorous and brilliant historical, ecclesiological, and analogical arguments. Jaroslav Pelikan, an expert on the history of Christian doctrine, considers the essay the quintessential work on the subject.⁶¹ Newman is regarded by all parties as a penetrating and remarkable theological mind. The following excerpts from his book present his argument in kernel form:

Granting that some large variations of teaching in its long course of 1800 years exist, nevertheless, these, on examination, will be found . . . to proceed on a law, and with a harmony and a definite drift, and with an analogy to Scripture revelations, which . . . constitute an argument in their favor, as witnessing to a superintending Providence and a great Design.⁶²

It becomes necessary . . . to assign certain characteristics of faithful developments . . . the presence of which serves as a test to discriminate between them and corruptions. . . . I venture to set down Seven Notes . . . as follows: There is no corruption if it retains one and the same type, the same principles, the same organization; if its beginnings anticipate its subsequent phases, and its later phenomena protect and subserve its earlier; if it has a power of assimilation and revival, and a vigorous action from first to last.⁶³

Principle is a better test of heresy than doctrine. Heretics are true to their principles, but change to and fro, backwards and forwards, in opinion; for very opposite doctrines may be exemplifications of the same principle. . . . Thus Calvinists become Unitarians from the principle of private judgment. The doctrines of heresy are accidents and soon run to an end; its principles are everlasting. . . . Protestantism, viewed in its more Catholic aspect, is doctrine without active principle; viewed in its heretical, it is active principle without doctrine.⁶⁴

A corruption is a development in that very stage in which it ceases to illustrate, and begins to disturb, the acquisitions gained in its previous history. . . . A true development . . . is an addition which illustrates . . . the body of thought from which it proceeds. . . . It is of a tendency conservative of what has gone before it.⁶⁵

Dissolution is that further state to which corruption tends. Corruption cannot, therefore, be of long standing; and thus duration is another test of a faithful development. . . . A corruption . . . is distinguished . . . by its *transitory character*.⁶⁶

If it be true that the principles of the later Church are the same as those of the earlier, then . . . the later in reality agrees more than it differs with the earlier, for principles are responsible for doctrines. Hence they who assert that the modern Roman system is the corruption of primitive theology are forced to discover some difference of principle . . . for instance, that the right of private judgment was secured to the early Church and has been lost to the later, or again, that the later Church rationalizes and the earlier went by faith. . . . As to Protestantism it is plain in how many ways it has reversed the principles of Catholic theology.⁶⁷

Newman's arguments are highly complex and are greatly illuminated by the countless historical examples he produces in order to corroborate his "seven notes" of the characteristics of true developments, not to mention his fabulous, highly acclaimed style of English prose. Thus, the essay deserves to be read in its entirety.

To summarize, when these "notes" are applied, it is found that Protestantism fails the seven tests (that is, insofar as it differs from Catholicism), whereas Catholicism is altogether consistent with them. Protestantism did not develop the doctrines that distinguish it from Catholicism (not even with reference to the beliefs of the early Church, of which it claims to be the restorer). Rather, it contains many new doctrines that had never before been present in the history of Christianity. Protestantism fails utterly in its attempts to find these in the early Church and therefore must be regarded as a corruption where it radically departs from the Christianity that preceded it for 1500 years.

On the other hand, highly developed Catholic doctrines, such as the

Immaculate Conception and the full-blown papacy, can be shown to be consistent with all the marks of true developments. As Newman states:

The Christianity of history is not Protestantism. If ever there were a safe truth, it is this. And Protestantism . . . as a whole, feels it, and has felt it. This is shown in the determination . . . of dispensing with historical Christianity altogether, and of forming a Christianity from the Bible alone. . . .⁶⁸

Cardinal Newman was not the first major Christian figure to “invent” the notion of development of doctrine, as is often cynically supposed. In the late second century, St. Irenaeus speaks of Christian doctrine as “everywhere the same.” Yet he goes on to assert that “constantly it has its youth renewed by the Spirit of God, as if it were some precious deposit in an excellent vessel; and it causes the vessel containing it also to be rejuvenated.”⁶⁹

Tertullian, writing around 206, states that “the grace of God works and perfects up to the end.”⁷⁰

St. Vincent of Lerins, writing around 434, gave the classic exposition found in the Church Fathers:

In the Catholic Church herself every care must be taken that we may hold fast to that which has been believed everywhere, always, and by all. For this is, then, truly and properly Catholic. . . .⁷¹

Will there, then, be no progress of religion in the Church of Christ? Certainly there is, and the greatest. . . . But it is truly *progress* and not a *change of Faith*. What is meant by *progress* is that something is brought to an advancement within itself; by *change*, something is transformed from one thing into another. It is necessary, therefore, that understanding, knowledge, and wisdom grow and advance strongly and mightily . . . and this must take place precisely within its own kind, that is, in the same teaching, in the same meaning, and in the same opinion. The progress of religion in souls is like the growth of bodies, which, in the course of years, evolve and develop, but still remain what they were.... Although in the course of time something evolved from those first seeds and has now expanded under careful cultivation, nothing of the characteristics of the

seeds is changed. Granted that appearance, beauty, and distinction has been added, still, the same nature of each kind remains.⁷²

Dogma . . . may be consolidated in the course of years, developed in the sequence of time, and sublimated by age — yet remain incorrupt and unimpaired . . . so that it does not allow of any change, or any loss of its specific character, or any variation of its inherent form.⁷³

It should flourish and ripen; it should develop and become perfect . . . but it is sinful to change them [dogmas] . . . or mutilate them. They may take on more evidence, clarity, and distinctness, but it is absolutely necessary that they retain their plenitude, integrity, and basic character. . . .

The Church of Christ is a faithful and ever-watchful guardian of the dogmas which have been committed to her charge. In this sacred deposit she changes nothing, she takes nothing . . . she adds nothing to it.⁷⁴

Here we have almost all the elements outlined by Newman fourteen centuries later, yet Protestant controversialists such as George Salmon claim that Newman's views were a radical departure from Catholic precedent!⁷⁵

Cardinal Newman points out the relative development of two doctrines in the early Church, as an example:

Some notion of suffering . . . or other vague forms of the doctrine of *Purgatory*, has in its favor almost a *consensus* of the first four ages of the Church. . . . Whereas no one will say that there is a testimony of the Fathers, equally strong, for the doctrine of *Original Sin*. . . . In spite of the forcible teaching of St. Paul on the subject, the doctrine of Original Sin appears neither in the Apostles' nor the Nicene Creed.⁷⁶

Finally, St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) commented:

Regarding its substance, then, Faith does not grow with the passage of time, for whatever has been believed since was contained from the start in the Faith of the ancient fathers. As regards its explication, however, the number of articles has increased, for we moderns explicitly believe what they believed implicitly.⁷⁷

Development of doctrine, then, has been the constant teaching of the Catholic Church from the beginning, and all through her history. Only a misunderstanding of what development entails, or ignorance of the history of Christian doctrine, could cause anyone to doubt this. Nor is the concept hostile in any way to the considerable amount of biblical data that can be brought to bear on the subject.

Development is not necessarily corruption, as so many Evangelical Protestants casually assume. Rather, it is novel innovation — according to Scripture, the early Church, the Fathers, the councils, and continuous Catholic Tradition — which is certainly a corruption of true apostolic Christianity (see Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 11:2; 2 Thess. 3:6; Gal. 1:9, 12; Jude 3).

New Testament evidence for development of doctrine

Holy Scripture does not contain an explicit presentation of development, yet, as is the case with all Catholic doctrines (whether found “in depth” in the Bible or not), a great deal of implicit or indirect indication exists. In general, whenever Scripture refers to the increasing knowledge and maturity of Christians (especially collectively), an idea very similar to doctrinal development is present.

Furthermore, we find, clearly, that doctrine in fact develops before our eyes on the pages of Scripture — a process usually denoted as “progressive revelation” by Protestant theologians. Examples are numerous: the doctrine of the afterlife; the Trinity; the Messiah (who was eventually revealed in full as God the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity); the Holy Spirit (fully presented as a Divine Person in the New Testament); the acceptance of the Gentiles as equal to Jews in the eyes of God; the bodily Resurrection; aspects of the Law; sacrifice of lambs developing into the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ; and many more instances.

Progressive revelation is very similar to development of doctrine insofar as, in both cases, more is learned about particular aspects of theology and spiritual life over time. Scripture is in no way hostile to development. Rather, we find that certain Protestant presuppositions wrongly preclude

development for fear of “excess.”

Matthew 13:31-32: “The kingdom of Heaven is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown, it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”

John 14:26: “But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”

John 16:13: “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.”

1 Corinthians 2:9-10: “ ‘What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him,’ God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God” (see also 1 Cor. 2:11-16).

Ephesians 4:13-16: “. . . until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body . . . makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love” (see also Matthew 5:17, in which Jesus implies that he will further develop Jewish Law; St. Paul also refers to the perhaps related idea of a “fullness of time,” in Galatians 4:4 and Ephesians 1:10).

Chapter Four

The Eucharist

“This is my Body”

The Council of Trent, in its *Decree Concerning the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist*, of October 11, 1551, defined the following propositions — which had always been the prevailing beliefs throughout Church history — as absolutely binding on all Catholics:

In the august sacrament of the holy Eucharist, after the consecration of the bread and wine, our Lord Jesus Christ, true God and man, is truly, really, and substantially contained under the species of those sensible things.^{[78](#)}

Immediately after the consecration, the veritable Body of our Lord and His veritable Blood, together with His soul and divinity, are under the species of bread and wine . . . as much is contained under either species as under both.^{[79](#)}

By the consecration of the bread and of the wine a conversion is made of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the Body of Christ our Lord, and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of His Blood; which conversion is by the holy Catholic Church suitably and properly called transubstantiation.^{[80](#)}

The Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist (the Greek word for “thanksgiving”) is much misunderstood by non-Catholics (and many Catholics as well). Christ’s substantial and physical presence in the Eucharist doesn’t negate other types of spiritual presence. Rather, it is referred to as “real” because it is a presence in the fullest possible sense of the word.^{[81](#)}

Therefore, the Real Presence must by its very nature be distinguished from God’s omnipresence, or a merely symbolic, “spiritual” presence. The great German Catholic theologian Karl Adam lucidly described the Eucharist:

So completely does Jesus disclose Himself to His disciples . . . that He

gives Himself to them and enters into them as a personal source of grace. Jesus shares with His disciples His most intimate possession, the most precious thing that He has, His own self. . . . So greatly does Jesus love His Community, that He permeates it. . . with His real self, God and Man. He enters into a real union of flesh and blood with it, and binds it to His being even as the branch is bound to the vine.⁸²

The Catholic Church teaches that there are many purposes of the Eucharist and numerous spiritual benefits that accrue from partaking in Communion at Mass — provided this is undertaken in a “worthy manner” and without conscious mortal sin.⁸³ It is the “source and summit of the Christian life,”⁸⁴ the sign of Christian unity and of the Body of Christ, the Church, an act of thanksgiving to God, a memorial and a sacrifice, the central focus of the Liturgy and the Mass, the empowering of the faithful for ministry, a symbol of God’s faithfulness and miraculous provision, an anticipation of the wedding feast of the Lamb in Heaven, a remembrance of the Last Supper and of Christ’s Passion, Resurrection, and return, a sign of salvation, the “bread of Heaven,” adoration and worship of God, union with Christ, the means of grace, cleansing from sin, and spiritual renewal, and an offering for the dead.⁸⁵

The daunting word *transubstantiation* is easily understood when broken down: *trans* means “change.” Therefore, the term is defined literally as the process of change of substance. The Catholic Church, in seeking to understand the Real Presence, a doctrine delivered directly by our Lord and St. Paul, gradually developed an explanation as to the exact nature of this miraculous and mysterious transformation.

Contrary to the common misconception, transubstantiation is not dependent upon Aristotelian philosophy, since some notion of the concept goes back to the earliest days of the Church, when Aristotle’s philosophy was not known. The eastern Fathers, before the sixth century, used the Greek expression *metaousiosis*, or “change of being,” which is essentially the same idea.

The Church did, however, draw upon prevalent philosophical categories, such as *substance* and *accidents*. In all ages, Christians have sought to defend Christianity by means of philosophy and human learning (wherever the individual intellectual categories utilized were consistent with Christian

Faith). St. Paul, for instance, did this in his sermon on Mars Hill in Athens, where he made reference to pagan poets and philosophers (Acts 17:22-31). St. Augustine incorporated elements of Platonic thought into his theology, and St. Thomas Aquinas synthesized Aristotle and Christianity into a unified, consistent system of Christian thought (Scholasticism or Thomism).

Transubstantiation is predicated upon the distinction between two sorts of change: *accidental change* occurs when nonessential outward properties are transformed in some fashion. Thus, water can take on the properties of a solid (ice) or of a gas (steam), while remaining chemically the same. A *substantial change*, on the other hand, produces something else altogether. An example of this is the metabolism of food, which becomes part of our bodies as a result of chemical and biological processes initiated by digestion. In our everyday experience, a change of substance is always accompanied by a corresponding transition of accidents, or properties.

But in the Eucharist — a supernatural transformation — substantial change occurs without accidental alteration. Thus, the properties of bread and wine continue after consecration, but their essence and substance cease to exist, replaced by the substance of the true and actual Body and Blood of Christ. It is this disjunction from the natural laws of physics which causes many to stumble (see John 6:60-69). The following chart may be helpful for understanding different types of change:

A Comparison of Accidental and Substantial Change

Type of change	Example	Accidents (appearance)	Substance (essence)
Natural Accidental	Water to ice or steam	Changed	Same
Natural Substantial	Metabolism of food	Changed	Changed
Supernatural Accidental	Miracles of the loaves (Matt. 14:19)	Changed (quantity)	Same
Supernatural	Transubstantiation	Same	Changed

Substantial

Transubstantiation is difficult for the natural mind (especially with its modern excessively skeptical bent) to grasp and clearly requires a great deal of faith. Yet many aspects of Christianity that conservative, Evangelical, orthodox Christians have no difficulty believing transcend reason and must ultimately be accepted on faith, such as the Incarnation (in which a helpless infant in Bethlehem is God!), the Resurrection, the omniscience of God, the paradox of grace versus free will, eternity, the union of the human and divine natures in Christ (the Hypostatic Union), the Fall of Man and Original Sin, and the Virgin Birth, among many other beliefs. Transubstantiation may be considered *beyond* reason, yet it is not *opposed to* reason; suprarational, but not irrational, much like Christian theology in general.

If one accepts the fact that God became Man, then it cannot consistently be deemed impossible (as many casually assume) for him to become truly and really present under the appearances of bread and wine. Jesus, after his Resurrection, could apparently walk through walls while remaining in his physical (glorified) body (John 20:26-27). How, then, can the Real Presence reasonably be regarded as intrinsically implausible by supernaturalist Christians?

Likewise, much of the objection to this doctrine seems to arise out of a pitting of matter against spirit, or, more specifically, an *a priori* hostility toward the idea that grace can be conveyed through matter (which notion is the basis of sacramentalism). This is exceedingly curious, since precisely this concept is fundamental to the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus. If God did not take on matter and human flesh, no one would have been saved. Such a prejudice is neither logical (given belief in the miraculous and Christian precepts) nor scriptural, as we shall see.

Cardinal Newman, whom very few would accuse of being unreasonable or credulous, had this to say about the “difficulties” of transubstantiation:

People say that the doctrine of Transubstantiation is difficult to believe. . . . It is difficult, impossible to imagine, I grant — but how is it difficult to believe? . . . For myself, I cannot indeed prove it, I cannot tell *how* it is; but I say, “Why should it not be? What’s to hinder it? What do I know of

substance or matter? Just as much as the greatest philosophers, and that is nothing at all.” . . . And, in like manner . . . the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity. What do I know of the Essence of the Divine Being? I know that my abstract idea of three is simply incompatible with my idea of one; but when I come to the question of concrete fact, I have no means of proving that there is not a sense in which one and three can equally be predicated of the Incommunicable God.⁸⁶

Once one realizes that transubstantiation is a miracle of God, any thought of impossibility vanishes, since God is omnipotent and the sovereign Lord over all creation (Matt. 19:26; Phil. 3:20-21; Heb. 1:3). If mere men can change accidental properties without changing substance (for example, turning iron into molten liquid or even vapor), then God is certainly able to change substance without outward transmutation.

Therefore, having disposed of these weak philosophical objections, we can proceed to examine the clear and indisputable biblical data that reveal to us that God does in fact perform (through the agency of priests) the supernatural act of transubstantiation.

New Testament teaching on the Real Presence

John 6:47-63, 66: “ ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down from Heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from Heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh.’ The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, ‘How can this man give us his flesh to eat?’ So Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me. This is the bread which came

down from Heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever.’ This he said in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum. Many of his disciples, when they heard it, said, ‘This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?’ But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples murmured at it, said to them, ‘Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of man ascending where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.’ . . . After this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him.”

James Cardinal Gibbons, a notable figure in American Catholicism in the late nineteenth century, commented on this passage:

If the Eucharist were merely commemorative bread and wine, instead of being superior, it would really be inferior to the manna; for the manna was supernatural, heavenly, miraculous food, while bread and wine are a natural, earthly food. . . .

The multitude and the disciples who are listening to Him . . . all understood the import of His language precisely as it is explained by the Catholic Church. . . .

It sometimes happened, indeed, that our Savior was misunderstood by His hearers. On such occasions He always took care to remove from their mind the wrong impression they had formed by stating His meaning in simpler language [Nicodemus — John 3:1-15; leaven of the Pharisees — Matt. 16:5-12].”⁸⁷

Among the Jews of Jesus’ time, the phrase “eat the flesh” was a metaphor for a grievous injury.⁸⁸ It is obvious that our Lord did not use the phrase in this sense (which would have been nonsensical), so it is altogether reasonable to conclude that he intended a literal meaning. When Protestants claim that Jesus meant only to “believe” in him, or to “accept” him spiritually and symbolically by faith, they are violating their own hermeneutical tenet of interpreting Scripture according to the Jewish customs, idioms, and usages of the time. The current prevailing Protestant interpretation originated only centuries afterward (basically in the sixteenth century).⁸⁹

Surely Jesus would not condemn people to eternal punishment (John 6:53) for the neglect of something that they never even comprehended in the first place! Rather, it was the rejection of a divine revelation due to its difficulty that was the cause of the loss of eternal life (6:57-58). The hearers, it is true, did not grasp the miraculous, sacramental way in which Christ was speaking (6:60-61) and balked (somewhat understandably) at the notion of what they imagined to be some sort of grisly cannibalism (6:52). Jesus countered with a statement that his natural human body would ascend to Heaven and not remain on the earth (6:62), and that spiritual wisdom and grace are necessary in order to understand his words (6:63, 65).

But Jesus made it clear that the crucial dynamic in this situation was the willful acceptance or rejection of faith and belief in him (6:64). It is scarcely possible for anyone at that time to have intellectually grasped completely what our Lord was saying. But we know from Scripture that Jesus was repeatedly judgmentally rejected out of hand, particularly when he uttered cryptic statements (e.g., John 8:42-47; 12:35-43). Jesus should have been believed on faith, based on who he was and what he had already done to establish his divinity (Luke 11:29-36; John 20:28-29). Thus, according to Jesus, the nonacceptance of his message by many of his audience in this instance is due, not to mental noncomprehension, but rather to willful disobedience and the resisting of the Spirit (John 6:63-65; cf. Matt. 13:10-23). Fortunately for the disciples, they saved themselves by an act of more or less befuddled (but heartfelt) faith in the Lord (John 6:67-69).

Only here in the New Testament do we have an account of followers of Christ abandoning him for theological reasons (John 6:66). Certainly, if this exodus were based on a simple misunderstanding, Jesus would have assured these reluctant souls that he was speaking metaphorically, in order to get them to return. But he does no such thing. On the contrary, he reiterates his difficult teaching of eating his flesh no less than four times (6:54-58)!

Furthermore, according to the Greek in St. John's account, Jesus, after the skeptical query by the Jews (6:53), actually switches terms for "eat." At first John's Greek word (nine times in John 6:23-53) is *phago*, a generic term for eat, used accordingly (literally) throughout the New Testament. But in John 6:54-58 the word used (four times) is the more graphic and particular *trogo*,

which means literally “gnaws” or “chews,” as any Greek lexicon (such as Kittel or Thayer) will confirm. *Trogo* occurs only in this passage and in Matthew 24:38 and John 13:18. In those two verses, it conveys literal eating, and there are strong contextual, exegetical, and linguistic reasons to believe that it is intended literally in John 6 as well.

Therefore, Jesus, rather than softening his “rhetoric,” which is to be expected if his intent was intellectually misunderstood (and after all, being God, he knew all the thoughts of men), spoke in even more physical and descriptive terms, so as to clarify and remove any remaining doubts. This is nothing unusual: Jesus often put people “on the spot” and demanded decisive, self-denying allegiance (e.g., Matt. 10:34-39; 12:30; 19:21).

Fr. Bertrand Conway, author of the enormously popular *The Question Box*, a classic of Catholic apologetics, makes some very cogent points about this important discourse:

Catholics make a distinction between the first part of John 6 (vv. 26 to 51), wherein Christ speaks of Himself figuratively as the Bread of Heaven, a spiritual food to be received by faith, and the second part (vv. 51 to 59), wherein He speaks literally of His Flesh and Blood as a real food, and a real drink. “In the first part,” writes Atzberger, “the food is of the present, in the second of the future; there it is given by the Father, here by the Redeemer Himself; there it is simply called ‘bread,’ here the ‘Flesh of the Son of Man’; there our Lord speaks only of bread, here of His ‘Flesh and Blood’ ”⁹⁰

Christ makes a clear-cut distinction between three kinds of breads: the bread, or manna, of the desert (Exod. 16:15; John 6:49), given by Moses to the Jews in the past to nourish the body; the Bread of Heaven, or the Bread of Life (John 6:32, 35), Christ Himself, given by the Father in the present to the Jews as an object of faith; and the Bread of Life, Christ Himself in the Eucharist, to be given in the future by Christ for the life of the world (John 6:52).

Again, a figurative interpretation is impossible, according to the rules of language. If a figure of speech has a definite meaning, we cannot use it in a new sense, merely for purposes of controversy. . . .

We must remember that Christ, like every good teacher, made two sorts of answers to men who objected to His teaching. If they did not understand His meaning, He explained His doctrine more fully. In this way He explains . . . the possibility of the rich man being saved (Matt. 19:24-6), the fact of Lazarus's death (John 11:11-14), the idea of freedom (John 8:32-34; cf. John 4:31-34; 8:21-23). When His hearers understood His teaching but refused to accept it, He repeated His teaching with even more emphasis. Thus, He insisted upon His power to forgive sins, when the Scribes accused Him of blasphemy (Matt. 9:2-7), and insisted on His being eternal, when the Jews said He was not yet fifty years old (John 8:56-58).⁹¹

Conway goes on to refute the most common Protestant response — that of citing John 6:63 to the effect that when Jesus contrasts spirit and flesh, he is proclaiming the purely symbolic nature of the Eucharist:

The words *flesh* and *spirit*, when opposed to each other in the New Testament, never mean literal and figurative, but always the corrupted dispositions of sinful human nature (flesh) contrasted with human nature enriched by the grace of God (spirit). . . .⁹² Christ's meaning, therefore, is clear: My words are such as the mere carnal man cannot receive, but only the man endowed with grace. St. Chrysostom says: "Why, therefore did he say: The flesh profiteth nothing? Not of his flesh does he mean this. Far from it; but of those who would understand what he said in a carnal sense. . . . You see, there is question not of his flesh, but of the fleshly way of hearing" (*In Joan.*, 47, 2).⁹³

In conclusion, it is necessary to adopt a literal interpretation of the classic eucharistic passage in John 6 for at least eight reasons:

1. The nature of the language (such as *trogo*) used;
2. The graphic realism and intensive reiteration (for example, John 6:55);
3. The insurmountable exegetical difficulties of a figurative interpretation;
4. The absence of any correction by Christ of false interpretations by the hearers;
5. The common teaching methods of Jesus;
6. The reactions of the listeners;
7. The gravity and overriding importance of the teaching (John 6:53, 63), which Jesus, in his mercy and compassion, would not have allowed to

be misunderstood;

8. The constant and unwavering interpretation of the Church up to 1517.

Luke 22:19-20 (the Last Supper): “And he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ And likewise the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood’ ” (see also Matt. 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24).

Jesus says, “This is my body” (in other words, that which has the appearance of bread), not “*here* is my body,” which would infer more so the Lutheran view, whereby his body is present *along with* the bread and the wine (“consubstantiation”). The position that would make these words symbolic only — “this *represents* my body” — is a strained interpretation, since, as in John 6, a figure of speech not in common usage would have deceived the hearers. If the bread had been transformed into flesh with skin, bones, ligaments, and so forth, this would have been outright evidence (even though still miraculous) rather than the faith-requiring mystery that Christ intended the Eucharist to be.

Nothing in the actual text supports a metaphorical interpretation (especially given the exegetical comparison with John 6). Bread and wine are not even particularly analogous symbols of body and blood, neither for the Jews at that time nor for us. When the word *is* in Scripture has the meaning “symbolizes,” this sense is readily apparent (e.g., Matt. 13:38; John 10:7, 15:1; 1 Cor. 10:4), whereas in this case, it is not. Besides, the Last Supper was the Jewish feast of Passover, which involved a literal sacrificial lamb. It is hardly possible that the disciples could have entirely missed the profound significance of what Jesus was saying. Also immediately before and after this passage, our Lord spoke of his imminent suffering (Luke 22:15-16, 18, 21-22).

Even though the disciples likely did not fully understand Jesus’ meaning, they knew enough to know he was not speaking figuratively. This willing and sincere, but partial, understanding was typical of the disciples, such as in the climactic Gospel scene where St. Peter acknowledges the fact that Jesus is Messiah, the Son of God (Matt. 16:15-17) and is therefore called the “Rock” and given the “keys of the kingdom” (Matt. 16:18-19), yet goes on to rebuke Jesus for speaking of his Passion and Crucifixion (Matt. 16:21-22), thereby

incurring a stern reprimand from our Lord (Matt. 16:23).

1 Corinthians 10:16: “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?” (read 1 Cor. 10:14-22 for the context).

1 Corinthians 11: 27-30: “Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died” (read 1 Cor. 11:23-26 for the context).

James Cardinal Gibbons comments on these passages:

Could St. Paul express more clearly his belief in the Real Presence than he has done here? . . . He who receives a sacrament unworthily shall be guilty of the sin of high treason, and of shedding the blood of his Lord in vain. But how could he be guilty of a crime so enormous if he had taken in the Eucharist only a particle of bread and wine? Would a man be accused of homicide . . . if he were to offer violence to the statue or painting of the governor? Certainly not. In like manner, St. Paul would not . . . declare a man guilty of trampling on the blood of his Savior by drinking in an unworthy manner a little wine in memory of him.⁹⁴

Chapter Five

The Sacrifice of the Mass

“A Lamb . . . slain”

The Council of Trent, in its *Doctrine on the Sacrifice of the Mass* (September 17, 1562), authoritatively spelled out the details of this often misunderstood Catholic belief:

Our God and Lord, though He was about to offer Himself once on the altar of the Cross unto God the Father, by means of His death, there to obtain an eternal redemption (Heb. 9:12 ff.); nevertheless, because that His priesthood was not to be extinguished by His death, in the Last Supper . . . that He might leave, to His own beloved Spouse, the Church, a visible sacrifice, such as the nature of man requires, whereby that bloody sacrifice, once to be accomplished on the Cross, might be represented, and the memory thereof remain even unto the end of the world (1 Cor. 11:24), and its salutary virtue be applied to the remission of those sins which we daily commit — declaring Himself constituted a priest forever, according to the order of Melchisedech (Ps. 110:4), He offered up to God the Father His own Body and Blood under the species of bread and wine . . . and by those words, “Do this in commemoration of me” (1 Cor. 11:24), He commanded them and their successors in the priesthood to offer them....

And this is indeed that clean oblation, which cannot be defiled by any unworthiness or malice of those that offer it; which the Lord foretold by Malachi was to be offered in every place, clean to His name (Mal. 1:11). . . . This, in fine, is that oblation which was prefigured by various types of sacrifices (Gen. 4:4; 8:20, etc.), during the period of nature and of the law; inasmuch as it comprises all the good things signified by those sacrifices, as being the consummation and perfection of them all.⁹⁵

If anyone saith that the sacrifice of the Mass is only a sacrifice of praise and of thanksgiving; or that it is a bare commemoration of the sacrifice consummated on the Cross, but not a propitiatory sacrifice; or that it profits

him only who receives; and that it ought not to be offered for the living and the dead for sins, pains, satisfactions, and other necessities; let him be anathema.^{[96](#)}

If anyone saith that, by the sacrifice of the Mass, a blasphemy is cast upon the most holy sacrifice of Christ consummated on the Cross; or that it is thereby derogated from; let him be anathema.

Karl Adam, author of the marvelous book *The Spirit of Catholicism*, remarks upon the transcendent nature of the Mass:

The Sacrifice of Calvary, as a great supratemporal reality, enters into the immediate present. Space and time are abolished. The same Jesus is here present who died on the Cross.

The whole congregation unites itself with His holy sacrificial will, and through Jesus present before it, consecrates itself to the heavenly Father as a living oblation. So Holy Mass is a tremendously real experience, the experience of the reality of Golgotha.^{[97](#)}

It is crucial to understand that the Sacrifice of the Mass is not a “re-sacrifice” of Christ, as is the common misconception. Jesus does not die every time a priest offers Mass, since He died once, in history, on earth. Rather, as Adam notes, the Mass lifts us into heavenly realms, where all events are eternally present (as they are with God). The Mass is thus a re-presentation of the one Sacrifice at Calvary in a sacramental, unbloody manner. One may not agree with this belief, but opponents of Catholic doctrine should at least honestly and clearly understand what it is they contest.

Furthermore, in the Mass, Jesus Christ ultimately offers the sacrifice of himself (just as at the Last Supper), with the priest merely acting in his stead, as a purely secondary, instrumental agent. In no sense, then, is the Mass some sort of magic or “hocus pocus” (this phrase itself is a caricature of the Latin words of consecration: *Hoc est enim corpus meum*). The priest and congregation are willing participants in what is God’s supernatural work from beginning to end. This is the furthest thing from sorcery, which is the utilization of either demonic supernatural powers, or those thought to be natural, apart from the originating agency of a personal God (see Acts 8:17-

23).

Scriptural evidence for the Sacrifice of the Mass

Genesis 14:18: “And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High” (see also Lev. 23:13).

Psalm 110:4: “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.’ ”

This analogy between Jesus and the mysterious, majestic priest Melchizedek is made again in Hebrews (5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:1-28). The context of the entire Psalm 110 also makes it clear that Christ the Messiah is being referred to. This cross-reference must have some meaning.

We know very little about Melchizedek apart from his offering of bread and wine, his acceptance of tithes from Abraham, and his residence in “Salem,” which is believed by Bible scholars to be ancient Jerusalem, as determined by verses such as Psalm 76:2. He was at once king and priest, like Christ, and unlike the practice of ancient Israel.

Judging from this scant information, Jesus must, it seems, make an offering of bread and wine, *forever*. This is obviously not identical with the Sacrifice at Calvary, yet it seems to carry some profound significance. Since Christ did make this offering at the Last Supper (significantly, at the feast of Passover: see 1 Cor. 5:7) and commanded his followers to perpetuate it, it is quite reasonable to regard the Mass as the sacramental, supernatural continuance of Christ’s own self-sacrifice.

Malachi 1:11: “For from the rising of the sun to its setting, my name is great among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering; for my name is great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts” (see also Isa. 66:18, 21).

God here foretells a universally offered sacrifice that expands upon the Jewish Levitical priesthood, after the arrival of the Messiah (see, e.g., Ps.

22:27-3; Isa. 49:6). This cannot be a reference to the Sacrifice of the Cross, which occurred in one location only. Malachi speaks of a universal “pure offering” (singular rather than plural), precisely as in Catholic teaching.

Therefore, the Mass is the straightforward fulfillment of this prophecy. Protestants, to the contrary, can only surmise that this offering is merely metaphorical — with no particular justification from the text of Malachi itself. The context of this passage, both before and after, clearly has to do with actual, physical offerings, as all would agree.

The book of Hebrews

The theme of the Epistle to the Hebrews is Christ as our High Priest. As such, the “priestly” verses are very numerous (e.g., 2:17; 3:1; 4:14-16; 5:1-10; 6:20; 7:1-28; 8:1-6; 9:11-15, 24-28; 10:19-22). The teaching here acquires much more meaning within Catholic eucharistic theology, whereas, in evangelical, nonsacramental Protestant interpretation, it is necessarily “spiritualized” away. For nearly all Protestants, Jesus Christ is a priest only insofar as he dies sacrificially as the “Lamb” and does away with the Old Testament notion of animal sacrifice. This is not false, but it is a partial truth. Generally speaking, for the Catholic, there is much more of a sense of the ever-present Sacrifice of Calvary, due to the nature of the Mass, rather than considering the Cross a past event alone.

In light of the repeated references in Hebrews to Melchizedek as the prototype of Christ’s priesthood (5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:1-3, 17, 20), it follows that this priesthood is perpetual (forever), not one time only. For no one would say, for example, that Christ is King (present tense) if in fact he were King for only a short while in the past. This (Catholic) interpretation is borne out by explicit evidence in Hebrews 7:24-25: “He holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. Consequently he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.”

If Jesus perpetually intercedes for us, why should He not also permanently present himself as sacrifice to His Father? The connecting word,

consequently, seems to affirm this scenario. The very notion, fundamental to all strains of Christian theology, that the Cross and the Blood are efficacious here and now for the redemption of sinners, presupposes a dimension of “presentness” to the Atonement.

Granting that premise, it only remains to deny that God could, would, or should truly and actually re-present this one Sacrifice in the Mass. God certainly *can* do this, since he is omnipotent. He *wills* to do this because Jesus commanded the observance of the Lord’s Supper (Luke 22:19). Lastly, one can convincingly contend that he *should* do this in order to “bring home” graphically to Christians His Passion, Crucifixion, and Resurrection, and to impart grace in a real and profound way in Communion. The one propitiatory Atonement of Calvary is a past event, but the appropriation of its spiritual benefits to Christians is an ongoing process, in which the Mass plays a central role.

The Sacrifice of the Mass, like the Real Presence in the Eucharist, is an extension of the Incarnation. Accordingly, there is no rational *a priori* objection (under monotheistic premises) to the concept of God’s transcending time and space to present himself to his disciples. Nor is there any denying that the Sacrifice of Calvary is always present to God the Father and to Jesus Christ, God the Son. How then, can anyone deny that God could make the Cross sacramentally present to us as well?

To the objection that Scripture does not teach this, and therefore it should not be believed, we reply that the scriptural data above and the evidence below are conclusive.

The book of Revelation and the altar in Heaven

It is very interesting to note that the book of Revelation (also known by Catholics as the Apocalypse) describes an altar in Heaven (6:9; 8:3, 5; 9:13; 11:1; 14:18; 16:7). This is curious if much of Protestantism is correct about the abolition of altars, as a result of the death of Christ and cessation of the Jewish priestly system of the Old Covenant (the events in the book of Revelation all occur after Jesus’ Resurrection and Ascension). In actuality,

Scripture forms a continuous whole from beginning to end. There is no radical discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments, or between law and grace, as many Protestants are wont to believe.

Some verses in Revelation state that the “prayers of the saints” are being offered at the altar in the form of incense (8:3-4; cf. 5:8-9). But the climactic scene of this entire glorious portrayal of Heaven occurs in Revelation 5:1-7. Verse 6 describes “a Lamb standing as though it had been slain.” Since the Lamb (Jesus, of course) is revealed as sitting in the midst of God’s throne (5:6; 7:17; 22:1, 3; cf. Matt. 19:28, 25:31; Heb. 1:8), which is in front of the golden altar (Rev. 8:3), then it appears that the presentation of Christ to the Father as a sacrifice is an ongoing (from God’s perspective, timeless) occurrence, precisely as in Catholic teaching. Thus, the Mass is no more than what occurs in Heaven, according to the clear revealed word of Scripture. When Hebrews speaks of a sacrifice made once (Heb. 7:27), this is from a purely human, historical perspective (which Catholicism acknowledges in holding that the Mass is a “re-presentation” of the one Sacrifice at Calvary). However, there is a transcendent aspect of the Sacrifice as well.

Jesus is referred to as the Lamb twenty-eight times throughout Revelation (compared with four times in the rest of the New Testament: John 1:29, 36; Acts 8:32; 1 Peter 1:19). Why in Revelation (of all places), if the Crucifixion is a past event, and the Christian’s emphasis ought to be on the resurrected, glorious, kingly Jesus, as is stressed in Protestantism (as evidenced by a widespread disdain for crucifixes)? Obviously, the heavenly emphasis is on Jesus’ Sacrifice, which is communicated by God to John as present and “now” (Rev. 5:6; cf. Heb. 7:24). The very notion of lamb possesses inherent sacrificial and priestly connotations in the Bible.

If this aspect is of such paramount importance even in the afterlife, then certainly it should be just as real and significant to us. The Sacrifice of the Mass bridges all the gaps of space and time between our crucified Savior on the Cross and ourselves. Therefore, nothing at all in the Mass is improper, implausible, or unscriptural, which is why this doctrine was virtually unanimously accepted until the sixteenth century.

In conclusion, then, it is, I think, evident that the book of Hebrews and the scenes in Heaven in the book of Revelation are suffused with a worldview

and “atmosphere” that is very “Catholic.” The Mass, rightly understood, fulfills every aspect of the above passages, most particularly in the sense of Christ as the ultimate Priest for whom the earthly priest “stands in,” and in the timeless and transcendent character of the Sacrifice “made present” at Mass, but never deemed to be an addition to, or duplication of, the one bloody Sacrifice of our Lord at Calvary.

Chapter Six

The Communion of Saints

“All who are in Christ”

The Council of Trent, in its Session 25 (December 3 and 4, 1563) declared the following to be the dogmatic teaching of the Catholic Church:

The saints, who reign together with Christ, offer up their own prayers for men. . . . It is good and useful suppliantly to invoke them, and to have recourse to their prayers, aid, and help for obtaining benefits from God, through His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, Who is alone our Redeemer and Savior. . . . They think impiously who deny that the saints, who enjoy eternal happiness in Heaven, are to be invocated; or who assert either that they do not pray for men; or that the invocation of them to pray for each of us even in particular is idolatry; or that it is repugnant to the Word of God; and is opposed to the honor of the one mediator of God and men, Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5); or that it is foolish to supplicate vocally or mentally those who reign in Heaven. . . .

The holy bodies of holy martyrs, and of others now living in Christ, which bodies were the living members of Christ and the temple of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16), and which are by Him to be raised unto eternal life and to be glorified, are to be venerated by the faithful, through which (bodies) many benefits are bestowed by God on men. . . .

Moreover, that the images of Christ, of the Virgin Mother of God, and of the other saints are to be had and to be retained particularly in temples, and that due honor and veneration are to be given them; not that any divinity or virtue is believed to be in them, on account of which they are to be worshiped; or that anything is to be asked of them; or that trust is to be reposed in images, as was of old done by the Gentiles who placed their hope in idols; but because the honor which is shown them is referred to the prototypes which those images represent; in such wise that by the images which we kiss, and before which we uncover the head, and prostrate

ourselves, we adore Christ; and we venerate the saints whose similitude they bear. . . .⁹⁸

Catholics believe that the one Mystical Church and Body of Christ exists on three levels: the Church Militant on earth, the Church Triumphant in Heaven, and the Church Suffering in Purgatory, and that communication can take place between all three. Those of us on earth can pray for souls in Purgatory and invoke the saints in Heaven. Saints in Heaven pray for those in the other two realms of the Church. The souls in Purgatory also invoke the saints in Heaven and pray for earthly pilgrims.⁹⁹

We honor the saints in Heaven, who have more perfectly attained God's likeness (2 Cor. 3:18), we strive to imitate them, and we ask them for their efficacious prayers on our behalf and that of others. All honor ultimately goes back to God, whose graces are the source of all that is worthy of veneration in the saints. St. Jerome said, "We show veneration to the servants so that it might radiate back from them to the Lord."¹⁰⁰ It is God himself whom we praise when we celebrate in music, painting, and poetry his flowers, stars, sunsets, majestic birds, forests, mountains, or oceans. It is the painter who receives the accolades when his masterpiece is praised; likewise God with his creation, including the saints.¹⁰¹

Devotion to saints no more interferes with or corrupts the unique adoration due to God than does our love for friends and relatives. A robust devotion may give rise to the language of hyperbole, just as human lovers wax eloquent in their rapturous romantic praises of each other, never intending literally to worship the object of love and affection.

Furthermore, if we cherish the memory of mere political heroes, such as Jefferson and Lincoln, and even great sports figures, such as Joe Louis, with statues, and if we honor war heroes with monuments, such as the Vietnam Memorial, why should we not honor and venerate the great Christian saints and the towering righteous men and women of the Old Testament (see Heb. 12:22-23)?

We address judges as "Your Honor" and are commanded by God to honor our mothers and fathers (Eph. 6:2), widows (1 Tim. 5:3), Christian teachers (1 Tim. 5:17), wives (1 Pet. 3:7), fellow Christians (1 Cor. 12:12-26), and

governing authorities (Rom. 13:7; 1 Pet. 2:17). A spirit of honoring those who are worthy of honor is to typify the Christian (Rom. 12:10; 1 Pet. 2:17).

The saints are not only still alive, but much more vibrantly and intensely alive than we are, thoroughly able to influence and assist us, as the book of Revelation clearly testifies.¹⁰² They are not preoccupied with sitting on clouds and strumming harps, as our culture's ridiculous caricatures would have it. They still think, feel, will, love, and remember — all of our attributes are theirs (and many more: see Matt. 22:30; Rom. 8:29-30, 38-39; 1 Cor. 13:9-12, 15:42-43; Phil. 3:20-21; 1 John 3:2). The invocation of saints entails much more than merely mental inspiration, although that aspect is included as well.

A sound biblical basis for the veneration of saints can be found in the Pauline passages where the apostle exhorts his followers to “imitate” him (1 Cor. 4:16; Phil. 3:17; 2 Thess. 3:7-9) as he, in turn, imitates Christ (1 Cor. 11:1; 1 Thess. 1:6). Also, we are exhorted to honor and imitate the “heroes of the faith” in Hebrews 6:12 and Chapter 11, and to take heart in the examples of the prophets and Job, who endured suffering (James 5:10-11).

The veneration of relics of saints, an aspect of the Communion of Saints, is an extension of the incarnational and sacramental principle, whereby matter itself can convey grace. Sacramentals are objects or actions that can impart grace, but the individual's disposition and the prayers of others (rather than the inherent power of the ritual itself, as with the seven sacraments) are instrumental in whatever spiritual benefit accrues.¹⁰³ They are not magic charms, since they derive all power from God. Examples of sacramentals include holy water, blessings, medals, crucifixes, exorcisms, statues, the Sign of the Cross, and relics.

Relics, too, have an explicit biblical basis: The bones of Elisha were so spiritually powerful that they caused a dead man to come back to life (2 Kings 13:20-21). Elijah's mantle parted the Jordan river (2 Kings 2:11-14). A woman was cured of a hemorrhage after she touched the fringe of Christ's garment (Matt. 9:20-22). Jesus told her that her faith had made her well, so that both the physical object and the woman's disposition worked together. St. Peter's mere shadow healed the sick and cast out demons (Acts 5:15-16), as did “handkerchiefs or aprons” touched by St. Paul (Acts 19:11-12). The

last four examples are identical to Catholic secondary relics: objects that had come into contact with a saint or with Jesus.^{[104](#)}

Karl Adam sums up the Catholic position on the Communion of Saints:

God . . . takes up into Himself the whole creation that culminates in human nature, and in a new, unheard-of supernatural manner, *lives* in it, *moves* in it, and in it *is* (see Acts 17:28). That is the basis upon which the Catholic veneration of the saints and Mary must be judged. . . . The saints are not mere exalted patterns of behavior, but living members and even constructive powers of the Body of Christ....

The veneration which we give to angels and saints is essentially different from the worship which we offer to God. . . . To God alone belongs the complete service of the whole man, the worship of adoration.... But so pervasive . . . is God's glory that it . . . is reflected also in those who in Him have become children of God. . . . We love them as countless dewdrops in which the sun's radiance is mirrored. We venerate them because we find God in them. . . . Therefore are we confident that they can and will help us only so far as creatures may. They cannot themselves sanctify us. . . .

The divine blessing never works without the members, but only in and through their unity.... Therefore, although the veneration of saints has undergone some development in the course of the Church's history . . . yet such veneration was from the beginning germinally contained in the nature of the Church as the Body of Christ . . . the fellowship and solidarity of His members. . . . It is no pagan growth, but indigenous to Christianity. . . . Popular devotion to the saints is in line with dogma and is utterly monotheistic in character. . . . The devout Catholic . . . for the ordinary and fundamental concerns of his soul . . . practices . . . an immediate intercourse of prayer with God.^{[105](#)}

Scriptural evidence for the Communion of Saints

Protestants are inclined to think that biblical evidences for the Communion of

Saints and “saintly intercession” are entirely lacking, but such is assuredly not the case, as the following proofs demonstrate:

1 Samuel 28:12, 14-15: “When the woman saw Samuel [who was dead], she cried. . . . And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed, with his face to the ground, and did obeisance. Then Samuel said to Saul, ‘Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?’ ” (Read 1 Sam. 28:7-20.)

Some commentators (for example, Tertullian and St. Jerome) have denied that this was actually Samuel, thinking that “Samuel” in this passage was an impersonating spirit of some sort, conjured up by the medium of Endor (1 Sam. 28:7). The current consensus among biblical commentators, however, appears to be that it was indeed Samuel the prophet, in an appearance after his death.¹⁰⁶ This was also the view of the ancient rabbis, St. Justin Martyr, Origen, and St. Augustine, among others. Sirach 46:20 reinforces the latter interpretation: “After he had fallen asleep he [Samuel] prophesied and revealed to the king his death, and lifted up his voice out of the earth in prophecy, to blot out the wickedness of the people.” Samuel would have been in *Sheol* (Greek, *Hades*), the netherworld of the dead, which explains his speaking of being “brought up.”

In any event, he appeared due to a miracle of God, not the magic or sorcery of a medium, and his true prophecy of Saul’s impending death (1 Sam. 28:19) mitigates against the demonic interpretation, as does the medium’s stunned reaction (1 Sam. 28:12-13). And Samuel prophetically speaks just as he did when alive on the earth.

Tobit 12:12, 15: “I brought a reminder of your prayer before the Holy One; and when you buried the dead, I was likewise present with you. . . . I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels who present the prayers of the saints and enter into the presence of the glory of the Holy One.”

We find here a clear instance of angels interceding for us and somehow being involved in our prayers to God — an important aspect of the doctrine of the Communion of Saints (for the canonicity of Sirach, Tobit, and 2 Maccabees, see Appendix Three). The angel Raphael, it would seem, had to have some knowledge of the prayers of the saints in order to present them to God. Furthermore, it appears probable that direct reference is made to this passage

in both Revelation 1:4 and 8:3-4.

2 Maccabees 15:13-14: “Then likewise a man appeared, distinguished by his gray hair and dignity, and of marvelous majesty and authority. And Onias spoke, saying, ‘This is a man who loves the brethren and prays much for the people and the holy city, Jeremiah, the prophet of God.’ ”

This is an account of a vision seen by Judas Maccabeus (15:11). Onias, a deceased high priest, appears, praying with outstretched hands for the whole body of the Jews (15:12). He proceeds to introduce Judas to the prophet Jeremiah, who had been dead for centuries, yet who, according to Onias, intercedes much for the Jews. Jeremiah also speaks to Judas (15:16). Thus, we have an undeniable proof of the intercession of (dead) saints on behalf of inhabitants of the earth.

Lest someone question this evidence because it is in the so-called Apocrypha, similar information is conveyed in the Protestant Bible, in Jeremiah 15:1: “Then the Lord said to me, ‘Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my heart would not turn toward this people.’ ” Here it appears that God receives the prayers of the dead saints as a matter of course. Moses and Samuel were both known as intercessors, and Jeremiah lived centuries after both men. Also, Revelation 5:8 (in all likelihood) and 6:9-10 chronicle dead saints acting as intercessory intermediaries, as we shall see.

Matthew 17:1-3: “Jesus took with him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain apart. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him” (see also Mark 9:4 and Luke 9:30-31).

Departed saints are again pictured as intensely interested in earthly affairs, just as angels are portrayed throughout the Bible. It is neither logical nor plausible to deny that these saints pray for us. If they are aware of our affairs, it follows that they can “hear” our petitions. If so, this is the Catholic doctrine of the invocation of the saints.

Matthew 18:10: “See that you do not despise one of these little ones; for I tell you that in Heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father

who is in Heaven.”

This is the most straightforward biblical proof for the idea (also accepted by many Protestants) that every person has a guardian angel, who has direct access to God and in some sense “oversees” and protects the individual to whom he is assigned (see also Ps. 34:7, 91:11; Acts 12:15; Heb. 1:14).

If Jesus could have asked for the assistance of angels (Matt. 26:53) — and he certainly would not have been worshiping them in so doing — then we, who obviously need their help far more than the Lord Jesus Christ, can do the same without necessarily engaging in idolatry.

It stands to reason that if angels are so aware of our doings, as indicated in Luke 15:10, where they are said to have joy over sinners’ repentance, and in 1 Corinthians 4:9, where we are told that apostles were spectacles to angels, then they certainly would be cognizant of our prayerful pleas to them. Repentance is a change of heart and will, which would suggest that angels are acquainted with our thoughts as well as with our actions.

This belief was held by the eminent Presbyterian theologian Charles Hodge, who thought that angels could act on our minds, and even “communicate with our spirits.”¹⁰⁷ Yet he inconsistently balked at the notion of invoking their aid, since “they must not come between us and God.”¹⁰⁸ This is an unnecessary dichotomy and false dilemma; the reasoning is as follows: If some practice can possibly become idolatrous, we must never engage in it. But anything can come between us and God and become an idol (for example, the Bible itself, our spouses, or money). So Hodge’s fear is unwarranted and unreasonable — especially given the scriptural evidence — and it “proves too much.” For asking an angel (or a saint) to pray for us is not that different at all from our praying for each other. In both cases, assistance is sought from a fellow creature, and (rightly understood) there is no attempt to usurp the prerogatives of God whatsoever.

The existence of guardian angels can be denied only by maintaining that intercessory requests directed to them are synonymous with either the worship due to God alone (idolatry) or the communication with evil spirits by means of a medium, or other occultic practice (necromancy or sorcery). Neither equation is biblical or logical.

If angels are powerful, benevolent beings, whose purpose is to bring us closer to God, and if they know our thoughts (Luke 15:10) and intercede for us (Tob. 12:12-15; Rev. 8:3-4), what coherent biblical reason forbids the invocation of angels, particularly guardian angels, to obtain their intercession before God on our behalf?

Misunderstandings of the doctrines and the legitimate pious devotional practices of Catholicism must give way to open-minded biblical inquiry. God revealed these avenues of grace for our spiritual well-being, and it would be foolish to ignore them.

Matthew 27:50, 52-53: “And Jesus cried again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. . . . The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs after his Resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.”

Appearances such as these lessen the artificial dichotomy between Heaven and earth that Protestants create out of an unfortunate, almost obsessive fear of idolatry, and unbiblical mental habit. If God wants contact between the living and the dead, who are we to forbid it in terms of prohibiting the invocation of saints and angels, which is merely the logical outcome of the belief that these beings are alive and wholly active, mentally, emotionally, volitionally, and spiritually (as suggested, for example, by Hebrews 12:1: “We are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses”)?

Revelation 1:4: “Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne” (cf. Tob. 12:15; Rev. 3:1, 4:5, 5:6).

Cardinal Newman made a fascinating comment on this scripture:

The sacred writer goes so far as to speak of *grace* and *peace* being sent to us, not only from the Almighty, but from *the seven Spirits* . . . thus associating the Eternal with the ministers of His mercies; and this carries us on to the remarkable passage of St. Justin, one of the earliest Fathers, who, in his *Apology* (2.1), says, “To Him [God], and His Son who came from Him . . . and the host of other good Angels who follow and resemble Him, and the Prophetic Spirit, we pay veneration and homage.”¹⁰⁹

Revelation 5:8: “The four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and with golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.”

Revelation 8:3-4: “And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer; and he was given much incense to mingle with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar before the throne; and the smoke of the incense rose with the prayers of the saints from the hand of the angel before God.”

It is somewhat unclear whether the twenty-four elders in this scene are angels or men, and commentators differ on it. Early Christian Tradition associated them with the twelve patriarchs of Israel and the twelve Apostles, representing the churches of the Old and New Covenants (see Isa. 24:23; Dan. 7:9-10). References to them clad in white garments, with golden crowns (Rev. 4:4, 10) suggests the view that these elders are glorified human beings (see, e.g., 2 Tim. 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:4; Rev. 2:10; 3:5, 11; 6:11; 7:9, 13-14). In any event, in both examples above, creatures — whether men or angels — are involved with our prayers as intercessory intermediaries, which isn't supposed to happen if the Catholic belief in the intercession of saints and angels is untrue.

Revelation 6:9-10: “I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne; they cried out with a loud voice, ‘O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before thou wilt judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth?’ ”

Here the martyrs in Heaven are uttering what are known as “imprecatory prayers.” These are not so much vengeful as they are a plea for, and recognition of, God's role as the wrathful Judge who will rescue and vindicate the righteous, either in this life or the next. Examples can be found particularly in the Psalms (35, 59, 69, 79, 109, 139) and in Jeremiah (11:18 ff., 15:15 ff., 18:19 ff., 20:11 ff.).

An angel offers up a very similar prayer in Zechariah 1:12. Jesus mentions a type of this prayer in Matthew 26:53, in which he states that he could have prayed to the Father and received legions of angels to prevent his arrest, had it been the Father's will. The idea is the same: prayer for judgment to be

wrought upon the enemies of God. At the same time, imprecatory prayers often are intercessions on behalf of the righteous, as in this passage.

Therefore, unarguably, dead saints are praying for Christians on earth. If they can intercede for us, why should we not ask for their prayers? Clearly, they are aware of what is happening on earth, as indicated in this passage and, for instance, Hebrews 12:1. They are more alive, unfathomably more righteous, and obviously closer to God than we are. Omniscience is not required for them to hear our prayers, as is often charged. Rather, we have reason to believe that they are out of time, and therefore not subject to its constraints. We ought to ask for their prayers just as we would ask for the intercession of a fellow Christian on earth, and, if James 5:16 is true, their prayers will have incomparably more effect.

The well-known Protestant *New Bible Commentary* states that this plea in Heaven is indeed a prayer, which quickens the end of the age (8:1-5).¹¹⁰ This admission is of immense significance for our topic. For if the prayers of dead saints have such an importance regarding the last days and the final judgment, who can deny that such prayers are valid and effective with regard to far more mundane matters (such as our everyday concerns)? The doctrine of the Communion of Saints, then, would appear to be irrefutably presented in the book of Revelation.

Revelation 11:3: “And I will grant my two witnesses power to prophesy for one thousand two hundred and sixty days” (read Rev. 11:3-13).

The Protestant Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown commentary comments on the identity of these witnesses:

The actions of the two witnesses are just those of Moses when witnessing for God against Pharaoh . . . and of Elijah . . . as Malachi 4:5-6 seems to imply (cf. Matt. 17:11; Acts 3:21). Moses and Elijah appeared with Christ at the Transfiguration. . . . As to Moses, cf. Deuteronomy 34:5-6; Jude 9. . . . Many of the early Church thought the two witnesses to be Enoch and Elijah. This would avoid the difficulty of the dying a *second* time, for these never have died [Gen. 5:24; 2 Kings 2:11]. . . . Still, the turning the water to blood, and the plagues (vs. 6), apply best to Moses.¹¹¹

Dead saints and earthly affairs

All of these instances of miraculous appearances of long-dead figures (as opposed to other resurrections, such as those of Lazarus and Jairus's daughter), from Matthew 17 and 27, 1 Samuel 28, and Revelation 11, lead to the conclusion that God allows and approves of interaction between the saints in the next life and Christians in this one.

These biblical facts supply indisputable evidence for the Catholic doctrine of the Communion of Saints, supported partially by reputable Evangelical Protestant commentaries (without acknowledging the "Catholic" implications therein). Taken as a whole, along with the other proofs above, they cast severe doubt on any notion of an unbridgeable gulf between Heaven and earth (that is, between members of the one Body of Christ: Rom. 12:4-5; Eph. 4:4; Col. 3:15).

It is interesting to note that Moses and Samuel, who together are present in two and perhaps three (Rev. 11:3) examples of extraordinary reappearances, are both renowned among Jews and Christians for their powerful intercession (Exod. 32:11-12; 1 Sam. 7:9; Ps. 99:6; Jer. 15:1 — an implied after-death prayer), thus unifying the two concepts of concern for earthly affairs and prayer for the same.

In all of these cases, much communication takes place with people on earth: Samuel talks to Saul (and Saul replies), Moses and Elijah talk to Jesus within earshot of Peter, James, and John,^{[112](#)} the two witnesses prophesy for three and a half years (they must also have engaged in much conversation during all that time), and the resurrected saints of Matthew 27 "appeared to many," presumably talking with them, as did Jesus in His post-Resurrection appearances.

In light of these biblical examples, how could anyone contend that God *forbids* such interaction, allowing only that between man and God, and also, occasionally, between men and angels? God was in charge of all these occurrences, so that if they were contrary to the unique mediatorship of Christ, as Protestants put it, he could have easily disallowed them.

But God sent Moses and Elijah to the Mount of Transfiguration, Samuel to Saul (even notwithstanding an occultic context), the two witnesses (whoever they may be), and many dead saints. (One could plausibly contend that Christ's reappearances would have been sufficient, without all of these formerly interred saints running around Jerusalem!)

In conclusion, all the elements of the Catholic doctrine of the Communion of Saints are solidly grounded in Scripture. If this interpretation is questioned, alternative explanations ought to be produced, instead of merely unsubstantiated polemical denials of the Catholic positions (which is far too often the case).

Summary of biblical evidences

- *Prayers for the dead:* Tobit 12:12; 2 Maccabees 12:39-45; 1 Corinthians 15:29; 2 Timothy 1:16-18 (see "Purgatory" chapter).
- *Dead saints are aware of earthly affairs:* Matthew 22:30; Luke 15:10; 1 Corinthians 4:9; Hebrews 12:1.
- *Dead saints intercede for those on earth:* Jeremiah 15:1; 2 Maccabees 15:14; Revelation 6:9-10.
- *Saints are intermediaries and present our prayers to God:* Revelation 5:8.
- *Dead saints appear on earth to interact with men:* 1 Samuel 28:12-15 with Sirach 46:20; 2 Maccabees 15:13-16; Matthew 17:1-3 and 27:50-53; Revelation 11:3.
- *Guardian angels:* Psalm 34:7, 91:11; Matthew 18:10; Acts 12:15; Hebrews 1:14.
- *Angels are aware of our thoughts:* Luke 15:10; 1 Corinthians 4:9.
- *Angels participate in the giving of God's grace:* Revelation 1:4.
- *Angels are intermediaries and present our prayers to God:* Tobit 12:12, 15; Revelation 8:3-4 (cf. 5:8).

Whatever one thinks about such practices, it is clearly not the case that those who developed and defended these views intended to lessen the veneration of God. The Protestant accusation of "idolatry" and so forth, betrays an utter noncomprehension of the rationale behind the Communion of Saints. Whenever and wherever truly idolatrous excesses occur, these are not in

accord with the teaching of the Catholic Church and must be thought of as aberrations, rather than sanctioned practices of Catholicism.

Except for a sizable minority faction within Anglicanism (and perhaps tiny factions here and there), the Communion of Saints, as understood in the Catholic Tradition, has been rejected outright by Protestantism, on grounds that it is either idolatrous, unbiblical, unnecessary, or quasi-occultic. But even in recent times, an “icon” of sorts among Evangelical Protestants, C. S. Lewis, maintained that the invocation of saints had a legitimate theological rationale behind it, even though he himself did not completely agree with this viewpoint. Some other prominent Protestants have also maintained some semblance of the traditional beliefs concerning the Communion of Saints. [113](#)

Chapter Seven

Purgatory

“Saved, but only as through fire”

The Second Ecumenical Council of Lyons in 1274 defined Purgatory for the Catholic faithful:

Those who, after Baptism, lapse into sin must not be rebaptized, but obtain pardon for their sins through true penance; that if, being truly repentant, they die in charity before having satisfied by worthy fruits of penance for their sins of commission and omission, their souls are cleansed after death by purgatorial and purifying penalties . . . and that to alleviate such penalties, the acts of intercession of the living faithful benefit them, namely the sacrifices of the Mass, prayers, alms, and other works of piety. . .

As for the souls of those who, after having received holy Baptism, have incurred no stain of sin whatever, and those souls who, after having contracted the stain of sin, have been cleansed, either while remaining still in their bodies or after having been divested of them as stated above, they are received immediately into Heaven.^{[114](#)}

The word *Purgatory* is derived from the Latin *purgatorio* (“cleansing,” “purifying”). The Catholic Church has not defined whether Purgatory is a place or a process, or whether it contains real fire. The sufferings correspond to the degree of sin present for each individual. This purifying pain, although assuredly intense, does not exclude the presence of much peace and joy. These souls love God deeply, and they have the assurance of eventual entrance into Heaven; therefore, they do not despair, but always possess hope. Purgatory is the vestibule of Heaven, not the anteroom of Hell. It is the mountain-climb to the glorious summit of the Beatific Vision of God, rather than a “second Hell,” as much popular mythology would have it. Purgatory will cease to exist after the general judgment.

The necessity of Purgatory flows from infused (actual, transforming) justification, and the doctrine is consistent with penance, merit, the Communion of Saints, sanctification, and indulgences. All Christians should seek after purity, perfection, and righteousness. Catholicism merely approaches this goal with the utmost seriousness by maintaining that some purification will be necessary after death for most of us, since holiness is a prerequisite for entering into the presence of God (Rev. 21:27).

Protestants agree that real (not merely declared or imputed) holiness is a requirement for Heaven, but disagree with the purification process, believing instead in some sort of *instantaneous* transformation at death for the redeemed. Thus, in Protestantism, both salvation and ultimate glorification are essentially one-time events, whereas in Catholicism, they are durational *processes* (both belief-systems are logically consistent with their premises).

Karl Adam, penetrating and astute as usual, offers an illuminating explanation of Purgatory:

The poor soul, having failed to make use of the easier and happier penance of this world, must now endure all the bitterness and all the dire penalties which are necessarily attached by the inviolable law of God's justice to even the least sin, until she has tasted the wretchedness of sin to its dregs and has lost even the smallest attachment to it, until all that is fragmentary in her has attained completeness, in the perfection of the love of Christ. It is a long and painful process, "so as by fire." Is it real fire? We cannot tell; its true nature will certainly always remain hidden from us in this world. But we know this: that no penalty presses so hard upon the "poor souls" as the consciousness that they are by their own fault long debarred from the blessed Vision of God. The more they are disengaged gradually in the whole compass of their being from their narrow selves, and the more freely and completely their hearts are opened to God, so much the more is the bitterness of their separation spiritualized and transfigured. It is homesickness for their Father; and the further their purification proceeds, the more painfully are their souls scourged with its rods of fire. . . .

Purgatory is only a thoroughfare to the Father, toilsome indeed and painful, but yet a thoroughfare, in which there is no standing still and which is illuminated by glad hope. For every step of the road brings the Father

nearer. Purgatory is like the beginning of spring. Warm rays commence to fall on the hard soil and here and there awaken timid life. . . . Countless souls are already awakening to the full day of eternal life. . . .¹¹⁵

Cardinal Newman, in his Anglican period, preached with fascinating insight on this subject:

In one sense, all Christians die with their work unfinished. Let them have chastened themselves all their lives long, and lived in faith and obedience, yet still there is much in them unsubdued — much pride, much ignorance, much unrepented, unknown sin, much inconsistency, much irregularity in prayer, much lightness and frivolity of thought. Who can tell, then, but, in God's mercy, the time of waiting between death and Christ's coming, may be profitable to those who have been His true servants here, as a time of maturing that fruit of grace, but partly formed in them in this life — a school-time of contemplation, as this world is a discipline of active service? Such, surely, is the force of the Apostle's words, that "He that hath begun a good work in us, will perform it *until* the day of Jesus Christ," *until*, not *at*, not stopping it with death, but carrying it on to the Resurrection. And this, which will be accorded to all Saints, will be profitable to each in proportion to the degree of holiness in which he dies. . . .

It will be found, on the whole, that death is not the object put forward in Scripture for hope to rest upon, but the *coming of Christ*, as if the interval between death and His coming was by no means to be omitted in the process of our preparation for Heaven.¹¹⁶

The Bible itself — closely examined — doesn't compel us to think that God's work of grace in each soul is instantaneously completed at the moment of physical death. If approached without an ultimately groundless bias against any process of sanctification after death, the biblical data is sufficient to establish the Catholic position, or at least make it plausible enough to accept on the basis of a Tradition very well-attested throughout the history of the Church up to the Protestant Reformation, when it was first rejected outright.

Scriptural evidence for Purgatory

Psalm 66:12: “Thou didst let men ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water; yet thou hast brought us forth to a spacious place.”

This verse was considered a proof of Purgatory by Origen^{[117](#)} and St. Ambrose,^{[118](#)} who posits the water of Baptism and the fire of Purgatory.

Ecclesiastes 12:14: “For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.”

Isaiah 4:4: “When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning” (see also Isa. 1:25-26).

St. Francis de Sales, the great Catholic apologist of the sixteenth century, commented on this verse as follows:

This purgation made in the spirit of judgment and of burning is understood of Purgatory by St. Augustine, in the twentieth book of the *City of God*, Chapter 25. And in fact this interpretation is favored by the words preceding, in which mention is made of the salvation of men, and also by the end of the chapter, where the repose of the blessed is spoken of; wherefore that which is said — “the Lord shall wash away the filth” — is to be understood of the purgation necessary for this salvation. And since it is said that this purgation is to be made in the spirit of heat and of burning, it cannot well be understood save of Purgatory and its fire.^{[119](#)}

Isaiah 6:5-7: “And I said: ‘Woe is me! for I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.’ Then flew one of the seraphim to me, having in his hand a burning coal which he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth, and said: ‘Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin forgiven.’ ”

This passage is a noteworthy example of what happens when men

experience God's presence directly. An immediate recognition of one's own unholiness occurs, along with the corresponding feeling of inadequacy. Like Isaiah, we must all undergo a self-conscious and voluntary purging upon approaching God more closely than in this present life.

Few doctrines are clearer in Scripture than the necessity of absolute holiness in order to enter Heaven. On this, Protestants and Catholics are in total agreement. Therefore, the fundamental disagreement on this subject is: how *long* does this purification upon death take? Certainly, it cannot be logically denied as a *possibility* that this purging might involve duration.

Micah 7:8-9: "Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy; when I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord because I have sinned against him, until he pleads my cause and executes judgment for me. He will bring me forth to the light; I shall behold his deliverance" (see also Lev. 26:41, 43; Job 40:4-5; Lam. 3:39).

St. Jerome (d. 420) considered this a clear proof of Purgatory.^{[120](#)} Cardinal Newman (not yet Catholic at this point) offered lucid commentary on this passage:

There are a very great many cases, I fear, where persons, religious and well-meaning, according to the ordinary standard, are little or not at all impressed with the notion that their past sins, whether from their moral consequences, or as remembered by God, are a present disadvantage to them...

Nothing surely is more common among persons of the most various characters of mind than thus to think that God forgets sin as soon as we forget it. . . .

It is clear that men commonly think a sin to be canceled when it is done and over, or, in other words, that *amendment is an expiation*. . . .

Now it will be answered that the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ are

sufficient to wash out all sin, and that they really do wash it out. Doubtless; but the question to be decided is, whether He has promised to apply His all-sufficient merits at once on persons doing nothing more than changing their mode of living. . . . Men in general... think that the state of grace in which they are is such as to absorb (as it were) and consume all sin as fast as it springs up in the heart — or they think that faith has this power of obliterating and annihilating sin, so that in fact there is nothing on their conscience to repent of. They consider faith as superseding repentance. . . .

Regret, vexation, sorrow, such feelings seem to this busy, practical, unspiritual generation as idle; as something despicable and unmanly — just as tears may be. . . .

However, it may be objected . . . that little indeed is said in the New Testament about...the necessity of such deprecation on the part of Christians. In answer, I allow that there is very little in the New Testament concerning the punishment of Christians; but then there is as little said about their sins; so that if Scripture negatives everything which it is silent about, it would be as easy to show that the Gospel does not belong at all to those who have lapsed into sin, as that punishments are not their portion, and penitential acts not their duty. As the sins of Christians are beyond the ordinary contemplation of Scripture, so are their remedies.^{[121](#)}

Malachi 3:2-4: “But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi, and refine them like gold and silver, till they present right offerings to the Lord. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years.”

St. Francis de Sales recounts the patristic views on this passage:

This place is expounded of a purifying punishment by Origen (*Hom. 6 on Exodus*), St. Ambrose (*On Ps. 36*), St. Augustine (*City of God*, Bk. 20, ch. 25), and St. Jerome (on this place). We are quite aware that they

understand it of a purgation which will be at the end of the world by the general fire and conflagration, in which will be purged away the remains of the sins of those who will be found alive; but we still are able to draw from this a good argument for our Purgatory. For if persons at that time have need of purgation before receiving the effects of the benediction of the supreme Judge, why shall not those also have need of it who die before that time, since some of these may be found at death to have remains of their imperfections....St. Irenaeus in this connection, in Chapter 29 of Book 5, says that because the Militant Church is then to mount up to the heavenly palace of the Spouse, and will no longer have time for purgation, her faults and stains will there and then be purged away by this fire which will precede the judgment.^{[122](#)}

2 Maccabees 12:39-42, 44-45: “Judas and his men went to take up the bodies of the fallen. . . .Then under the tunic of every one of the dead they found sacred tokens of the idols of Jamnia, which the law forbids the Jews to wear. . . . So they all . . . turned to prayer, beseeching that the sin which had been committed might be wholly blotted out. . . . For if he were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead. But if he was looking to the splendid reward that is laid up for those who fall asleep in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Therefore he made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin.”

The Jews offered *atonement* and *prayer* for their deceased brethren, who had clearly violated Mosaic Law. Such a practice presupposes Purgatory, since those in Heaven would not need any help, and those in Hell are beyond it. The Jewish people, therefore, believed in prayer for the dead (whether or not this book is scriptural; Protestants deny that it is). Christ did not correct this belief, as He surely would have done if it were erroneous (see Matt. 5:22, 25-26, 12:32; Luke 12:58-59, 16:9, 19-31). When our Lord and Savior talks about the afterlife, he never denies that there is a third state, and the overall evidence of his utterances in this regard strongly indicates that he accepted the existence of Purgatory.

Matthew 5:22: “But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his

brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be liable to the Hell of fire.”

St. Francis de Sales elucidates the implications of this statement of Christ:

It is only the third sort of offense which is punished with Hell; therefore in the judgment of God after this life there are other pains which are not eternal or infernal — these are the pains of Purgatory. One may say that the pains will be suffered in this world; but St. Augustine and the other Fathers understand them for the other world. And again may it not be that a man should die on the first or second offence which is spoken here? And when will such a one pay the penalty due to his offense? ...Do then as the ancient Fathers did, and say that there is a place where they will be purified, and then they will go to Heaven above. [123](#)

Matthew 5:25-26: “Make friends quickly with your accuser, while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison; truly, I say to you, you will never get out till you have paid the last penny” (see also Luke 12:58-59).

St. Francis de Sales:

Origen, St. Cyprian, St. Hilary, St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, and St. Augustine say that the way which is meant in the *whilst thou art in the way* [*while you are going with him to court*] is no other than the passage of the present life: the *adversary* [*accuser*] will be our own conscience ...as St. Ambrose expounds, and Bede, St. Augustine, St. Gregory [the Great], and St. Bernard. Lastly, the judge is without doubt our Lord....The *prison*, again, is...the place of punishment in the other world, in which, as in a large jail, there are many buildings; one for those who are damned, which is as it were for criminals, the other for those in Purgatory, which is as it were for debt. The *farthing* [*penny*]... [represents] little sins and infirmities, as the farthing is the smallest money one can owe.

Now let us consider a little where this repayment ...is to be made. And we find from most ancient Fathers that it is in Purgatory: Tertullian,¹²⁴ Cyprian,¹²⁵ Origen,¹²⁶ ...St. Ambrose,¹²⁷ St. Jerome.¹²⁸ . . . Who sees not that in St. Luke the comparison is drawn, not from a murderer or some criminal, who can have no hope of escape, but from a debtor who is thrown into prison till payment, and when this is made is at once let out?

This then is the meaning of our Lord, that whilst we are in this world, we should try by penitence and its fruits to pay, according to the power which we have by the blood of the Redeemer, the penalty to which our sins have subjected us; since if we wait till death, we shall not have such good terms in Purgatory, when we shall be treated with severity of justice.¹²⁹

Matthew 12:32: “And whoever says a word against the Son of man will be forgiven; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.”

If sins can be pardoned in the “age to come” (the afterlife), again, in the nature of things, this must be in Purgatory. We would laugh at a man who said that he would not marry in this world or the next (as if he could in the next — see Mark 12:25). If this sin cannot be forgiven after death, it follows that there are others which *can be*. Accordingly, this interpretation was held by St. Augustine,¹³⁰ St. Gregory the Great,¹³¹ Bede,¹³² and St. Bernard,¹³³ among others.

Luke 16:9: “And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal habitations” (read Luke 16:1-13 for the context).

St. Francis de Sales:

To *fail* — what is it but to die? — and the *friends* — who are they but the Saints? The interpreters all understand it so; whence two things follow — that the Saints can help men departed, and that the departed can be helped by the Saints.... Thus is this passage expounded by St. Ambrose and by St. Augustine.¹³⁴ But the parable our Lord is using is

too clear to allow us any doubt of this interpretation; for the similitude is taken from a steward who, being dismissed from his office and reduced to poverty [16:2], begged help from his friends, and our Lord likens the dismissal unto death, and the help begged from friends unto the help one receives after death from those to whom one has given alms. This help cannot be received by those who are in Paradise or in Hell; it is then by those who are in Purgatory.^{[135](#)}

Luke 16:19-31: “There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, full of sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man’s table. ...The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died and was buried; and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes, and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus in his bosom.

“And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy upon me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame.’ But Abraham said, ‘Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things, but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.’

“And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father’s house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’ But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.’

“And he said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if some one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if some one should rise from the dead.’ ”

Zechariah 9:11: “As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your captives free from the waterless pit.”

Ephesians 4:8-10: “ ‘When he ascended on high, he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.’ (In saying, ‘he ascended,’ what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is he who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)”

1 Peter 3:19-20: “He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly did not obey, when God’s patience waited in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water” (see also 1 Pet. 4:6).

Catholic commentator George Leo Haydock states:

Abraham’s bosom — the place of rest, where the souls of the saints resided, till Christ had opened Heaven by his death. . . . The bosom of Abraham (the common Father of all the faithful) was the place where the souls of the saints, and departed patriarchs, waited the arrival of their Deliverer. It was thither that Jesus went after his death; as it is said in the Creed, he descended into hell, to deliver those who were detained there, and who might at Christ’s Ascension enter into Heaven (see 1 Pet. 3:19; Matt. 8:11). . . .

[On 1 Peter 3:19-20:] These spirits in prison, to whom Christ went to preach after his death, were not in Heaven, nor yet in the Hell of the damned; because Heaven is no prison, and Christ did not go to preach to the damned. . . . In this prison souls would not be detained unless they were indebted to divine justice, nor would salvation be preached to them unless they were in a state that was capable of receiving salvation. [¹³⁶](#)

At the very least, these passages prove that there can and does exist a third, intermediate state after death besides Heaven and Hell. Thus, Purgatory is not *a priori* unthinkable from a biblical perspective (as many Protestants casually assume). True, the Hebrew Sheol is not identical to Purgatory (both righteous and unrighteous go there), but it is nevertheless strikingly similar. Sheol is referred to frequently throughout the Old Testament (Deut. 32:22; 2 Sam. 22:6; Ps. 16:10, 18:5, 55:15, 86:13, 116:3, 139:8; Prov. 9:18, 23:14; Isa. 5:14, 14:9,15; Ezek.

31:16-17, 32:21, 27). In Jewish apocalyptic literature (in the few hundred years before Christ), the notion of divisions in Sheol is found (e.g., Enoch 22:1-14).

The Christian Hell is equivalent to the New Testament Gehenna, or Lake of Fire. Gehenna was literally the burning ash-heap outside Jerusalem and was used as the name for Hell by Christ (Matt. 5:22, 29-30, 10:28, 18:9, 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5; cf. James 3:6). “Lake of fire” occurs only in Revelation as a chilling description of the horrors of Hell into which the damned would be thrown (Rev. 19:20, 20:10, 14-15, 21:8).

We know from Scripture that a few Old Testament saints went to Heaven before Christ went to Sheol and led (presumably) the majority of the pre-Christian righteous there (Eph. 4:8-10; 1 Pet. 3:19-20). Elijah went straight to Heaven by a whirlwind, as we are informed in 2 Kings 2:11. It is also generally thought by all sides that Enoch went directly to Heaven as well (Gen. 5:24). Moses came with Elijah to the Mount of Transfiguration to talk with Jesus (Matt. 17:1-3; Mark 9:4; Luke 9:30-31). By implication, then, it could be held that he, too, had been in Heaven, and by further logical inference, other Old Testament saintly figures.

It follows that, even before Christ, there was a “two-tiered” afterlife for the righteous: some, such as Elijah, Enoch, and likely Moses and others, went to Heaven, whereas a second, larger group went temporarily to Sheol. Likewise, now the elect of God can go straight to Heaven if sufficiently holy, or to Purgatory as a necessary stopping-point to attain to the proper sanctity that is becoming of inhabitants of heavenly glory. Therefore, it is neither true that all righteous dead before Christ went solely to Sheol, nor that all after his Resurrection went, and go, to Heaven. On the other hand, the reprobate dead in Sheol (or Hades) eventually are sentenced to Hell (Rev. 20:13-15).

Cardinal Newman comments:

Our Savior, as we suppose, did not go to the abyss assigned to the fallen angels, but to those mysterious mansions where the souls of all

men await the judgment. That He went to the abode of blessed spirits is evident, from His words addressed to the robber on the cross, when He also called it Paradise; that He went to some other place besides Paradise may be conjectured from St. Peter's saying, 'He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who had once been disobedient' (1 Pet. 3:19-20). The circumstances, then, that these two abodes of disembodied good and bad, are called by one name, Hades . . . seems clearly to show that Paradise is not the same as Heaven, but a resting-place at the foot of it. Let it be further remarked, that Samuel, when brought from the dead, in the witch's cavern, said, 'Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up?' (1 Sam. 28:15), words which would seem quite inconsistent with his being then already in Heaven.^{[137](#)}

1 Corinthians 3:11-15: "For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now, if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble — each man's work will become manifest; for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work which any man has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire."

This is a clear and obvious allusion to Purgatory, or at least, even for the most skeptical person, something exceedingly similar to it. Thus thought the Church Fathers, such as St. Cyprian,^{[138](#)} St. Ambrose,^{[139](#)} St. Jerome,^{[140](#)} St. Gregory the Great,^{[141](#)} Origen,^{[142](#)} and St. Augustine:

Lord, rebuke me not in Your indignation, nor correct me in Your anger [Ps. 38:1]. . . . In this life may You cleanse me and make me such that I have no need of the corrective fire, which is for those who are saved, but as if by fire. . . . For it is said: "He shall be saved, but as if by fire" [1 Cor. 3:15]. And because it is said that he shall be saved, little is thought of that fire. Yet plainly, though we be saved by fire, that fire will be more severe than anything a man can suffer in this life.^{[143](#)}

St. Francis de Sales observes:

The Apostle uses two similitudes. The first is of an architect who with solid materials builds a valuable house on a rock; the second is of one who on the same foundation erects a house of boards, reeds, straw. Let us now imagine that a fire breaks out in both houses. That which is of solid material will be out of danger, and the other will be burnt to ashes. And if the architect be in the first, he will be whole and safe; if he be in the second, he must, if he would escape, rush through fire and flame, and shall be saved yet so that he will bear the marks of having been in fire. . . . The fire by which the architect is saved can only be understood of the fire of Purgatory. . . .

When he . . . speaks of him who has built on the foundation, wood, straw, stubble, he shows that he is not speaking of the fire which will precede the day of judgment, since by this will pass not only those who have built with these light materials, but also those who shall have built in gold, silver, etc. All this interpretation, besides that it agrees very well with the text, is also most authentic, as having been followed with common consent by the ancient Fathers.^{[144](#)}

1 Corinthians 15:29: “Otherwise, what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf?”

St. Francis de Sales:

This passage properly understood evidently shows that it was the custom of the primitive Church to watch, pray, and fast for the souls of the departed. For, firstly, in the Scriptures, to be baptized is often taken for afflictions and penances; as in Luke 12:50 . . . and in St. Mark 10:38-9 . . . in which places our Lord calls “pains and afflictions” baptism [cf. Matt. 3:11, 20:22-3; Luke 3:16].

This, then, is the sense of that Scripture: if the dead rise not again, what is the use of mortifying and afflicting oneself, of praying and fasting for the dead? And indeed this sentence of St. Paul resembles that of 2 Maccabees 12:44 [cited above]: “It is superfluous and vain to pray for the dead if the dead rise not again.”...Now, it was not for those in Paradise [Heaven], who had no need of it, nor for those in

Hell, who could get no benefit from it; it was, then, for those in Purgatory. Thus did St. Ephraim [d. 373] expound it.¹⁴⁵

The “penance” interpretation is supported contextually by the next three verses, where the apostle speaks of being in peril every hour and dying every day. St. Paul certainly doesn’t condemn the practice, whatever it is (his question being merely rhetorical). Given these facts, and the striking resemblance to 2 Maccabees 12:44, the traditional Catholic interpretation seems the most plausible.

In any event, Protestants are at almost a complete loss in coherently explaining this verse — one of the most difficult in the New Testament for them to interpret. It simply does not comport with their theology, which utterly disallows any penitential or prayerful efforts on behalf of the deceased.

2 Corinthians 5:10: “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body.”

Our sins are judged here rather than forgiven, and this takes place in the next life. The standard Protestant theology of the judgment seat of Christ is not dissimilar to the notion of the chastising purifications of Purgatory. There is a direct relation between judgment and the purging of sin. We are punished, in some fashion — or so St. Paul tells us in this verse — for evil deeds done. The pains of Purgatory are roughly identical, or else highly akin, to this punishment, since they are the taking away of those sinful habits, tendencies, and affinities to which we have become attached. Conversely, we are rewarded for good deeds. As there are differential rewards for righteousness, so there are differential sufferings in Purgatory for unrighteousness, so that a certain parallelism exists between the two concepts.

This passage is a sort of liaison between the theological categories of justification and Purgatory (and penance) — the former being the “positive” establishment of sanctity, and the latter being the “negative” removal of unholiness. This congruity between reward and punishment is even more clearly seen in 1 Corinthians 3:11-15, where St. Paul freely

intermingles rewards and punishments, in the context of purgatorial fire. Given the obvious affinity of that passage with this one, each can be legitimately interpreted in light of the other. In doing so, the Catholic interpretation, with its distinctive understanding of faith and works, penance and Purgatory, is more satisfactory exegetically than the usual Protestant interpretations, which are uncomfortable, by and large, with differential rewards and punishments (seeing these as somewhat incompatible with faith alone).

2 Corinthians 7:1: “Let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and make holiness perfect in the fear of God” (see also 1 Thess. 3:13; 4:7).

Here is a description of that analogous process of sanctification in this life which will be greatly intensified and made completely efficacious in the next, in Purgatory.

Philippians 2:10-11: “At the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, in Heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Revelation 5:3, 13: “And no one in Heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it. . . . And I heard every creature in Heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all therein, saying, ‘To him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!’ ”

If God refuses to receive prayer, praise, and worship from the unrepentant sinner (Ps. 66:18; Prov. 1:28-30; Isa. 1:15, 59:2; Jer. 6:20; Amos 5:21-24; Mic. 3:4; Mal. 1:10; John 9:31; Heb. 10:38), why would he permit the damned to undertake this practice?

Furthermore, if God does not compel human beings to follow him and to enjoy his presence for eternity contrary to their free will, then it seems that he would not — as far as we can tell from Scripture — compel them to praise Him, as this would be meaningless, if not repulsive.

Therefore, “under the earth” must refer to Purgatory. Revelation 5:13 especially makes sense under this interpretation, as the praise spoken there does not in any way appear forced, but rather, heartfelt and seemingly spontaneous, which would not be at all expected of persons eternally consigned to Hell (see Matt. 8:29; Luke 4:34, 8:28; James 2:19).

Some Protestant commentators readily admit that “under the earth” is a reference to those in Sheol, or Hades. Granting this interpretation for the sake of argument, most Protestants would presumably regard Hades in this instance (after Christ’s death — see Revelation 5:12) as simply the “holding tank” for those ultimately destined for Hell (the elect having been taken to Heaven by Christ). But this leads straight back to the exegetical problem of God’s neither desiring nor accepting such praise from even the obstinate sinner, let alone the damned.

The acceptance of a third, intermediate state in the afterlife for the righteous as well as the reprobate, even after Christ’s Resurrection, is a seriously troublesome position if one holds to the tenets of mainstream Reformational eschatological theology. For, given the Protestant view on justification, why would (or should) there be a second state for the “saved” once the road to Heaven was paved by Christ? This state of affairs leads inexorably to considerations of differential merit and reward, such that a whole class is relegated to continued separation from Christ in some partial sense, and by implication, punishment, since these children of God have not yet attained to full union with God in eternal happiness and bliss.

Once it is conceded that (dead) righteous men praise God from “under the earth,” the standard Protestant position of all the saved “going straight to Heaven at death” crumbles, for the simple reason that this group is contrasted with those in Heaven. Furthermore, a position that “under the earth” refers metaphorically to merely all dead righteous (who, according to Protestantism are in Heaven), makes the phraseology of Philippians 2:10 and Revelation 5:3, 13 absurdly redundant, since St. Paul and St. John would be saying, “Those in Heaven, and on earth, and in Heaven . . .”

Again, the only reasonable alternate interpretation, given all the above

data, is to posit the existence of Purgatory, from which praise to God emanates — it being that portion of the Church stationed for a time in the portico of Heaven, so to speak.

2 Timothy 1:16-18: “May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me; he was not ashamed of my chains, but when he arrived in Rome, he searched for me eagerly and found me — may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that Day — and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus.”

Onesiphorus appears to be dead at the time St. Paul writes this letter to Timothy. If that is true, then Paul is praying for the dead. A well-known Protestant commentary¹⁴⁶ admits that Onesiphorus is likely dead, citing the cross-reference of 2 Timothy 4:19, yet takes the remarkably incoherent position that St. Paul is praying for his conduct in life and reward at the Judgment. Thus, the admitted prayer (2 Tim. 1:18), since it supposedly refers to the earthly life of the intended recipient, somehow thereby ceases to be a prayer for the dead, even though it is pleading for mercy on the Day of Judgment for one who has indeed departed!

Now, of course, St. Paul could also pray for a living person to be recompensed justly by God, but this is missing the point and is an example of the classic logical fallacy of proposing a “distinction without a difference.” For what distinguishes prayers for a living or a dead man, where the final judgment is concerned?

Protestants say that it is impermissible to pray for the dead on this score, since their fate is already sealed and it will be to no avail. The error here lies in the fact that the person’s fate had always been known (God being omniscient and out of time, foreordaining in a mysterious way the beginning and end of all things). In both cases, our knowledge is paltry and altogether insufficient as to the person’s destiny. We pray out of charity (or “desire,” as it were), and because we are commanded to, having been assured by the inspired biblical revelation that it has an effect.

The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown commentary, another respected

Evangelical reference, takes a different position: “His household would hardly retain his name after the master was dead. . . . Nowhere has Paul prayers for the dead, which is fatal to the theory . . . that he was dead.”¹⁴⁷

But *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, a linguistic commentary by the great Greek scholar A. T. Robertson, states: “Apparently Onesiphorus is now dead as is implied by the wish in 1:18.”¹⁴⁸

On the face of it, why couldn’t St. Paul be referring to the house of Onesiphorus in the same sense in which we speak of a deceased person’s “surviving wife and children”? His statement in 1:18 is similar to our spontaneous utterances at funerals, such as “May God rest his soul,” etc. (sometimes spoken or thought, despite theologies to the contrary). And if Paul is “wishing” for benefits for the soul of a dead man, as Robertson holds, how is this essentially any different from praying for the dead?

To conclude, of the three prominent Evangelical Protestant commentaries surveyed, two hold that St. Paul is “praying,” and one that he is “wishing.” Two conclude that Onesiphorus is probably dead, with a third denying this. It might be supposed with good reason that if reputable, scholarly Protestant commentators are more or less forced into (for them) uncomfortable positions due to the inescapable clarity of a text, perhaps the Catholic interpretation is the best one, as it requires no unnatural straining. All that is necessary is the willingness to accept the practice of prayers for the dead, for which there is ample scriptural warrant, Jewish precedent, and abundant support in the early Christian Church, as will be demonstrated subsequently.

Hebrews 12:14: “Strive for peace with all men, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord” (see also Heb. 12:1, 5-11, 15, 23; Eph. 5:5; 1 Thess. 4:3; 1 John 3:2-3).

Cardinal Newman writes:

The truth itself is declared in one form or another in every part of Scripture. It is told us again and again, that to make sinful creatures holy was the great end which our Lord had in view in taking upon Himself our nature, and thus none but the holy will be accepted for

His sake at the last day. The whole history of redemption, the covenant of mercy in all its parts and provisions, attests the necessity of holiness in order to salvation; as indeed even our natural conscience bears witness also. . . .

Even supposing a man of unholy life were suffered to enter Heaven, he would not be happy there; so that it would be no mercy to permit him to enter. . . . We conclude that any man, whatever his habits, tastes, or manner of life, if once admitted into Heaven, would be happy there. . . . [But] here every man can do his own pleasure, but there he must do God's pleasure. . . . "Let us alone! What have we to do with Thee?" is the sole thought and desire of unclean souls, even while they acknowledge His majesty. None but the holy can look upon the Holy One; without holiness no man can endure to see the Lord. . . .

Heaven is not Heaven, is not a place of happiness except to the holy. . . . There is a moral malady which disorders the inward sight and taste; and no man laboring under it is in a condition to enjoy what Scripture calls the fullness of joy in God's presence, and pleasures at His right hand forevermore. ¹⁴⁹

Newman explains (in effect) why Purgatory (which he accepts elsewhere, even before his conversion to Catholicism in 1845) is a necessary and, indeed, ultimately desirable process for all of us imperfect sinners to undergo, in order to approach God properly in his unfathomable majesty and holiness.

Hebrews 12:29: "Our God is a consuming fire" (see also Exod. 3:2-6, 19:18, 24:17; Num. 31:23; Deut. 4:24, 9:3; Ps. 66:10-12; Mal. 3:2, 4:1; Heb. 10:27, 31).

Revelation 21:27: "But nothing unclean shall enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life."

The relevance of this biblical data in terms of its analogy to the idea of Purgatory is very clear. The abundance of such scriptural evidence for Purgatory led to a consensus among the Church Fathers as well.

Protestant church historian Philip Schaff, who can definitely be considered a “hostile witness” as pertains this topic, summarized the belief of the early Christian Church:

These views of the middle state in connection with prayers for the dead show a strong tendency to the Roman Catholic doctrine of Purgatory. . . . There are traces of the purgatorial idea of suffering the temporal consequences of sin, and a painful struggle after holiness. . . . The common people and most of the fathers understood it of a material fire; but this is not a matter of faith. . . . A material fire would be very harmless without a material body. [150](#)

Despite all this, Protestantism rejected the beliefs in Purgatory and prayers for the dead, with the exception of Anglicans, many of whom have retained some form of these. C. S. Lewis was one of these traditional Anglicans. In one of his last books, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer*, he stated that he prayed for the dead, among whom were many of his loved ones, and that he believed in Purgatory, comparing it to an intense rinsing of the mouth at the dentist’s office. He thought no one would want to enter Heaven unclean, as this would be downright embarrassing. [151](#)

Chapter Eight

Penance

“Share Christ’s sufferings”

The doctrine of penance was dogmatically defined at the Council of Trent in its Session 14, November 25, 1551:

Finally, as regards satisfaction — which as it is, of all the parts of penance, that which has been at all times recommended to the Christian people by our Fathers . . . the holy synod declares that it is wholly false, and alien from the word of God, that the guilt is never forgiven by the Lord without the whole punishment also being therewith pardoned. For clear and illustrious examples are found in the Sacred Writings (Gen. 3:16 ff.; Num. 12:14 ff., 20:11 ff.; 2 Sam. 12:13 ff., etc.), whereby, besides by divine tradition, this error is refuted in the plainest manner possible. . . .

For, doubtless, these satisfactory punishments greatly recall from sin and check, as it were, with a bridle and make penitents more cautious and watchful for the future; they are also remedies for the remains of sin, and, by acts of the opposite virtues, they remove the habits acquired by evil living. Neither indeed was there ever in the Church of God any way accounted surer to turn aside the impending chastisement of the Lord than that men should, with true sorrow of mind, practice these works of penitence (e.g., Matt. 3:8; 4:17; 11:21). Add to these things that, whilst we thus, by making satisfaction, suffer for our sins, we are made conformable to *Jesus Christ*, who satisfied for our sins (Rom. 5:10; 1 John 2:1 ff.), *from whom all our sufficiency is* (2 Cor. 3:5); having also thereby a most sure pledge that, *if we suffer with Him, we shall also be glorified with Him* (Rom. 8:17). But *neither is this satisfaction*, which we discharge for our sins, so our own as not to be through Jesus Christ. For we who can do nothing of ourselves, *as of ourselves, can do all things, He cooperating who strengthens us* (Phil. 4:13). Thus, man has not wherein to glory, but *all our glorying is in Christ* (1 Cor. 1:31; 2 Cor. 10:17; Gal. 6:14): in whom we live; *in whom we merit* (cf. Acts 17:28); in whom we satisfy;

bringing forth fruits worthy of penance (Luke 3:8), which *from Him have their efficacy*; by Him are offered to the Father; and *through Him are accepted by the Father....*

For the ancient Fathers . . . teach that the keys of the priests were given, not to loose only, but also to bind (Matt. 16:19, 18:18; John 20:23). But not, therefore, did they imagine that the Sacrament of Penance is a tribunal of wrath or of punishments; even as *no Catholic ever thought that, by this kind of satisfactions on our parts, the efficacy of the merit and of the satisfaction of our Lord Jesus Christ is either obscured or in any way lessened*; which when the innovators seek to understand, they in such wise maintain a new life to be the best penance as to take away the entire efficacy and use of satisfaction.^{[152](#)}

Catholic apologist Bertrand Conway elaborates:

Not only must the sinner be truly sorry for his sins; he must also make satisfaction for them. Even when sins have been pardoned by God, there often remains the liability to temporal punishment to atone for the injury done Him, and to bring about the sinner's reformation. God often requires satisfaction of the sinner for the transgression of His laws, both natural and supernatural. The impure man may be forgiven his sin, and yet be punished for his immorality by ill health; the murderer may be pardoned his crime, and yet have to expiate it in the electric chair.

The Scriptures tell us that God pardoned Adam his disobedience, the Israelites in the desert their murmuring and idolatry, Moses his lack of faith, and David his murder, adultery, and pride; but they were all severely punished by Him (Gen. 3:19; Exod. 22:14, 27; Num. 14:20-23, 20:12; Deut. 32:51-52; 2 Sam. 12:13-14, ch. 24). St. Paul also speaks of sickness and death as temporal punishments for unworthy Communions (1 Cor. 11:30-32).^{[153](#)}

Catholic theologian Ludwig Ott further explains:

The virtue of penance, which is insistently recommended in both the Old and New Testaments (cf. Ezek. 18:21 ff., 33:11; Jer. 18:11, 25:5 ff.; Joel 2:12 ff.; Matt. 3:2, 4:17; Acts 2:38), and which at all times was a necessary

precondition for the forgiveness of sins, is that moral virtue, which inclines the will to turn away inwardly from sin, and to render atonement to God for it. . . .

External manifestations of the virtue of penance are the confession of sins, the performance of penitential works of every kind; for example, prayer, fasting, almsgiving, mortifications, and the patient bearing of all trials sent by God. . . .

The faithful on earth can, by their good works performed in the state of grace, render atonement for one another. The effect of the atonement is the remission of temporal punishment for sin. The possibility of vicarious atonement is founded in the unity of the Mystical Body. As Christ, the Head, in His expiatory sufferings, took the place of the members, so also one member can take the place of another. The doctrine of indulgences is based on the possibility and reality of vicarious atonement. . . .

Even in the Old Testament the idea of vicarious atonement by innocent persons for guilty is known. The innocent person takes on himself responsibility for the displeasure of God which the guilty person has merited, in order by sacrifice to win again the divine favor for the latter. Moses offers himself to God as a sacrifice for the people who sinned (Exod. 32:32). Job brings God a burnt offering, in order to expiate the sins of his children (Job 1:5). . . .

The Apostle Paul teaches that also the faithful can render expiation for one another (Col. 1:24; 2 Cor. 12:15; 2 Tim. 4:6). . . .

The possibility of meriting for others is based on the friendship of God for the just, and on the Communion of Saints. More effective than such merit is prayer for others. Cf. James 5:16: "Pray for one another, that you may be saved, for the continual prayer of a just man availeth much" (cf. 1 Tim. 2:1-4).¹⁵⁴

In the sacrament of Penance, it is required for a Catholic who commits a mortal sin to repent (express contrition),¹⁵⁵ confess the sin to a priest,¹⁵⁶ and be absolved by the priest (absolution)¹⁵⁷ in the name of Christ (Matt. 18:18; John 20:23).¹⁵⁸ Grace is received in absolution that will help to prevent future

sin. The priest also assigns a penance to be performed to remove the temporal punishment due to sin.¹⁵⁹ This expiation of moral transgressions is called satisfaction.¹⁶⁰ Venial sins may be confessed to a priest also (as the Church recommends), but this is not a binding requirement for a Catholic.¹⁶¹ These sins can be confessed directly to God, with whatever penance the contrite believer deems appropriate.

As penance is the imposition of (and, it is hoped, voluntary acceptance of) temporal punishment or penalties for sin, so indulgences are the remission or relaxation of these same temporal penalties, by virtue of the prayer and penitence (of various sorts) of others in the Church.¹⁶² The doctrine of indulgences presupposes both the Communion of Saints¹⁶³ and the treasury of merits, ultimately derived from the Person and work of Jesus Christ, secondarily through the holiness of the saints, especially the Blessed Virgin.¹⁶⁴

The Church has the jurisdiction mercifully to dispense these accumulated merits to those who possess less merit (see 1 Cor. 12:26).¹⁶⁵ Indulgences are a logical extension of infused justification and penance, and are essentially the same as any spiritual or temporal benefit applied to a person due to the prayer of another. In both cases, one Christian is assisted by the loving act of another.

The Council of Trent forbade the selling of indulgences, since abuses had become scandalous in the preceding period, thus agreeing with Luther and the Protestants on this point, while retaining the doctrine itself (not wanting to “throw the baby out with the bath water”).¹⁶⁶ In recent decrees on this doctrine, the Church has stressed that the pious disposition of the receiver of an indulgence is of foremost and primary importance (similar to the use of sacramentals, such as holy water).¹⁶⁷

To summarize, Catholics believe that sin causes a cosmic disturbance and is a direct insult to God, our Creator, and that it also perpetuates destructive tendencies and practices in the individual and disastrous results within the Church and the human community.¹⁶⁸ Sin effects a breach in our “friendship” with God, which requires some sort of reparation.¹⁶⁹

Penance and indulgences are complementary aspects of the thoroughly

biblical and harmonious Catholic system of theology wherein actual, infused justification (as opposed to merely imputed, forensic, or declared justification) takes place. If indeed, God's goal is to free us of sin in this life — as Catholics believe — then the expiation and elimination of sin is of the utmost importance: hence the doctrine and practice of penance.

Scriptural evidence for Penance

Exodus 32:30: “Moses said to the people, ‘You have sinned a great sin. And now I will go up to the Lord; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin’ ” (read also 32:31-32).

Here we have an example of vicarious atonement, whereby one member of the chosen people (analogous, of course, to the Church), sought to atone for others. This concept is essentially no different from intercessory prayer. The Catholic Church simply takes it further by stating that various works of charity, as well as voluntary and involuntary suffering, are efficacious for the purpose of blessing others and atoning for their sins. Furthermore, the notion of ritual blood atonement is common throughout the Old Testament (e.g., Exod. 29, 30; Lev. 4, 14, 16).

Such sacrifices were certainly but shadows of the great Atonement of Christ on the Cross. Yet they also prefigured vicarious atonement between and among Christians, since Moses, the priests, etc., were mere men who atoned for the Israelites in the sense of participating in the rituals foreordained and empowered by God.

Numbers 14:19-23: “ ‘Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray thee, according to the greatness of thy steadfast love, and according as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.’ Then the Lord said, ‘I have pardoned, according to your word; but truly, as I live, and as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord, none of the men who have seen my glory and my signs which I wrought in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have put me to the proof these ten times and have not hearkened to my voice, shall see the land which I swore to give to their fathers; and none of those who despised me shall see it.’ ”

God forgave the Israelites (14:20), due, at least in part to Moses' intercession (14:19). Yet punishment, or penance, remained (14:23) because of their exceedingly great disobedience, despite seeing signs and wonders (14:22). Thus, forgiveness is not complete in the sense that it removes all the ramifications of sin, or "cancels out" any further need for satisfaction and penitential acts, either undertaken voluntarily, ordered by legitimate Church authority, or ordained by God Himself by means of trials and tribulations.

Numbers 16:46-48: "And Moses said to Aaron, 'Take your censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and lay incense on it, and carry it quickly to the congregation, and make an atonement for them; for wrath has gone forth from the Lord; the plague has begun.' So Aaron took it as Moses said, and ran into the midst of the assembly; and, behold, the plague had already begun among the people; and he put on the incense, and made atonement for the people. And he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stopped."

This is another clear example of vicarious atonement, as in Exodus 32:30-32.

Numbers 25:11-13: "Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, has turned back my wrath from the people of Israel, in that he was jealous with my jealousy among them, so that I did not consume the people of Israel in my jealousy. Therefore say, 'Behold, I give to him my covenant of peace; and it shall be to him, and to his descendants after him, the covenant of a perpetual priesthood, because he was jealous for his God, and made atonement for the people of Israel' " (read also Num. 25:6-10).

It is no more foolish to believe that God's wrath can be ameliorated by acts (works) of obedience to his laws (in this case, the prevention of fornication and idolatry; see Numbers 25:1-5) than to believe the same is accomplished by intercessory prayer (as in Exodus 32:31-32). Both penitential acts exemplify unselfish love for others and are qualitatively equivalent. Such good works bring about a better relationship with God and improve the spiritual state of others in the Body of Christ, thus maintaining the communal nature of Christianity and the Church.

2 Samuel 12:13-14: "David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the Lord.' And Nathan said to David, 'The Lord also has put away your sin;

you shall not die. Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, the child that is born to you shall die.’ ”

Again, the sinner David was forgiven, but the temporal punishment was not obliterated (his child was to die; particular sins often harm the innocent who have nothing to do with them), as in Catholic teaching.

Proverbs 16:6: “By loyalty and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the Lord a man avoids evil.”

This principle is not unlike Catholic penance, in which sin is atoned for. Such penance and the sanctification resulting therefrom is not inconsistent with the Atonement of Christ, from which all these benefits flow as a stream from the ocean. In Protestantism, Christ’s Atonement makes all lesser participatory atonements null and void. Neither Scripture nor logic, however, requires such a false dichotomy.

Matthew 10:38: “And he who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.”

Matthew 16:24: “Then Jesus told his disciples, ‘If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me’ ” (see also Mark 8:34-35).

The disciple of Christ is called to suffer (Matt. 10:22; Mark 10:37-39; Luke 6:22; Acts 14:22; Rom. 5:3-5; 2 Cor. 12:7-10; Phil. 1:29; 1 Thess. 3:3; 2 Tim. 1:8, 2:3, 3:12; Heb. 5:8; James 1:2-4, 12; 1 Pet. 1:6-7, 2:20-21, 4:12-19; Rev. 1:9). No biblically informed Christian would dispute that. Controversy arises only over whether such sufferings can improve one’s estate vis-à-vis salvation, or help anyone else in the Body of Christ. Catholics believe that all our sufferings can be a source of grace for the one experiencing them, as well as helpful with regard to the spiritual graces of another (Rom. 15:1; 1 Cor. 12:24-26), to whom these penitential sufferings are applied (as in intercessory prayer), thus giving suffering the highest possible purpose and meaning.

Furthermore, the painful experience of being corrected by God, as parents discipline their children (Lev. 26:23-24; Deut. 8:2, 5; 2 Sam. 7:14; Job 5:17-18; Ps. 89:30-34, 94:12, 103:9, 118:18, 119:67, 71, 75; Prov. 3:11-12; Isa.

48:10; Jer. 10:24, 30:11, 31:18; Zech. 13:9; Mal. 3:3; 1 Cor. 11:32; Heb. 12:5-11; Rev. 3:19), is quite similar to the Catholic notion of temporal punishments for sin, which can be lessened by penance.

St. Paul explicitly expounds the Catholic doctrine of penance, suffering, and vicarious atonement in the following passages:

Romans 8:13, 17: “For if you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. . . . And if [we are] children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him” (see also 1 Cor. 15:31; 2 Cor. 6:9, 1 Pet. 4:1, 13).

1 Corinthians 11:27, 30: “Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. . . . That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died” (see also 1 Cor. 5:5; 11:31-32).

2 Corinthians 4:10: “. . . always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies” (see also 2 Cor. 1:5-7).

Philippians 2:17: “Even if I am to be poured out as a libation upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all” (see also 2 Cor. 6:4-10).

Philippians 3:10: “That I may know him and the power of his Resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death” (see also Gal. 2:20).

2 Timothy 4:6: “For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come” (see also Rom. 12:1).

In this verse and in Philippians 2:17, the Greek word for “libation” and “sacrifice” is *spendomai*. In the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, which was the Bible of the early Christians, this term is used for a variety of offerings and sacrifices commanded by the Mosaic Law (e.g., Gen. 35:14; Exod. 29:12, 38 ff.; Lev. 4:7 ff., 23:37). Most intriguing is its

occurrence with reference to the Messiah, Jesus, in Isaiah 53:12: “He poured out his soul to death.” It appears, then, that St. Paul is stressing a mystical, profound identification with Jesus even in his death (as also in 2 Cor. 4:10 and Phil. 3:10 above).

This comparison leads inexorably to the Catholic doctrine of vicarious atonement among members of the Body of Christ. In some mysterious, glorious way, God chooses to involve us in the very Redemption (always in a secondary and derivative sense, but actual nonetheless), just as he voluntarily involves us in his providence by means of prayer and evangelism, and in his creation by our procreation and childbirth. Our sufferings become identified with those of Christ. (Instances of the stigmata, whereby saintly persons — such as St. Francis of Assisi — actually receive the wounds of Christ in their bodies, are an extremely graphic image of this scriptural teaching.)

Since we are the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 1:22-23, 5:30; Col. 1:24 below), such a “radical” convergence is not to be unexpected. For instance, when St. Paul was converted to Christ, Jesus said to him, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting” (Acts 9:5). This couldn’t literally refer to Jesus the Divine Person, since he had already ascended to Heaven (Acts 1:9-11). Rather, Jesus meant that Christ’s Church really was his Body, whom Paul (Saul) was persecuting (Acts 8:1, 3; 9:1-2). Jesus also identifies the Church with himself in Matthew 25:34-45 (25:40 — “brethren”; cf. Matt. 12:50, 28:1; John 20:17). Thus, Jesus’ sufferings are ours, and ours are his in a very real sense, as St. Paul unmistakably teaches, particularly and most strikingly in Colossians 1:24:

Colossians 1:24: “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church” (see also 2 Cor. 11:23-30; Gal. 6:17).

A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture offers a precise explanation of the two traditional Catholic interpretations of this extraordinary verse:^{[170](#)}

What are the sufferings, or afflictions, of Christ to which Paul brings (along with the operation of Christ) completeness? . . . There are two opinions, each of which has Catholic supporters. First, the afflictions are those endured by Christ. The Passion is complete, infinite in its atoning or

satisfactory power. To this power neither St. Paul nor anyone else could add anything. But the application of the merits of Christ's Passion to individual souls involves a toll of suffering, especially on the part of those chosen by Christ as his ministers (cf. 1 Cor. 3:9). . . . His sufferings are in union with those of Christ. They are the vehicle for conveying the Passion to the hearts and souls of men, and in this way they bring completeness to the Passion in an external way. . . .

The other opinion regards the sufferings of Christ as those of the Mystical Body (cf. Acts 9:14). St. Augustine (*Enarr. in Ps.* 62, 4): "Thou [member of Christ's Body] sufferest so much as was to be contributed out of thy sufferings to the whole sufferings of Christ, that hath suffered in our Head, and doth suffer in his members, that is, in our own selves." The Passion of Christ, then, is continued in the members of his Body, the Church. This fits in with the truth that the Church is in a real though mystical sense Christ himself. . . .

The first opinion seems preferable; it gives the ordinary sense of the phrase "the sufferings of Christ." In either opinion, we are presented with an important lesson: suffering can be, not a terrifying enigma in our eyes, but something very precious, since it is the instrument God chose to redeem us, and we can make our sufferings serve in the cause of Christ's Passion (cf. Rom. 8:18, 28).

Biblical evidence for indulgences

Matthew 16:19: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven."

Matthew 18:18: "Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven."

John 20:23: "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

These passages form the biblical basis for priestly absolution (forgiveness), and broadly speaking, for both papal and Church jurisdiction (by extension, for the power to impose penance — binding, retaining — and to grant indulgences — loosing, forgiving). Matthew 16:19 was spoken by our Lord to St. Peter alone and is the primary foundation for the concept of the papacy (along with the preceding verse). Matthew 18:18 and John 20:23 were directed toward the twelve disciples. From these verses, among others, the Catholic Church deduces the power and governing jurisdiction of the bishops (in agreement with the Pope), especially in an ecumenical council, such as Trent or Vatican II.

Karl Adam, in his marvelously insightful book *The Spirit of Catholicism*, comments on the Catholic belief in indulgences:

The Church in virtue of her power of binding and loosing may supplement the poverty of one member out of the wealth of another. . . . All the main ideas upon which the doctrine of indulgences is based — the necessity of expiation for sin, the cooperative expiation of the members of the Body of Christ, the Church's power so to bind and loose on earth that her action is valid in Heaven — all these ideas are contained in holy Scripture.

So that although the historical form of the indulgence has undergone some change . . . and may in the future undergo further change, and although the theology of indulgences has only been gradually elaborated, yet in its substance the doctrine is in line with the pure thought of the Scriptures. Here, as in no other practice of the Church, do the members of the Body of Christ cooperate in loving expiation. All the earnestness and joyfulness, humility and contrition, love and fidelity, which animate the Body are here especially combined and manifested.^{[171](#)}

1 Corinthians 5:3-5: “I have already pronounced judgment in the name of the Lord Jesus on the man who has done such a thing. When you are assembled, and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (see 1 Cor. 5:1-2).

2 Corinthians 2:6-8, 10-11: “For such a one this punishment by the majority is enough; so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him,

or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him. . . . Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive . . . in the presence of Christ, to keep Satan from gaining the advantage over us; for we are not ignorant of his designs.”

St. Paul in his commands and exhortations to the Corinthians is in entire agreement with the Catholic tenets of penance and indulgences. He binds in 1 Corinthians 5:3-5 and looses in 2 Corinthians 2:6-7, 10, acting as a type of papal figure in 2 Corinthians 2:10, much like St. Peter among the Apostles. He forgives, and bids the Corinthian elders to forgive also, even though the offense was not committed against them personally. Clearly, both parties are acting as God’s representatives in the matter of the forgiveness of sins and the remission of sin’s temporal penalties (an indulgence). In this, as in all other doctrinal matters, the Catholic Church is grounded in the Bible, takes seriously all that she teaches, and grapples with all the implications and deepest wellsprings of Truth to be found within the pages of God’s holy Scriptures.

Cardinal Gibbons elaborates:

Here we have all the elements that constitute an Indulgence. First, a penance, or temporal punishment proportioned to the gravity of the offense, is imposed on the transgressor. Second, the penitent is truly contrite for his crime. Third, this determines the Apostle to remit the penalty. Fourth, the Apostle considers the relaxation of the penance ratified by Jesus Christ, in whose name it is imparted.^{[172](#)}

The doctrine of penance was indisputably believed and practiced by the early Church, as reputable Protestant Church history reference works admit.^{[173](#)} It was firmly established in the early Church and did not substantially change in the Middle Ages, but was only *developed*, like all Catholic doctrines. It was the subject of much reasoned speculation and discussion among the Scholastics (such as St. Thomas Aquinas), but it was neither invented nor distorted at this time, as the biblical evidence we have examined proves conclusively.

Chapter Nine

The Blessed Virgin Mary

“Hail, full of grace”

Karl Adam commented on the proper Catholic understanding of the Virgin Mary:

Mary . . . like every creature . . . was called into existence out of nothingness. An infinite distance separates her from the Infinite, from Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And she has no grace, no virtue, no privilege, which she does not owe to the divine Mediator. Both in her natural and in her supernatural being, she is wholly the gift of God, “full of grace” (Luke 1:28). There is nothing, therefore, so misguided and so preposterous as to decry the Mother of God as some “mother goddess,” and to talk of Catholicism having a polytheistic character. There is but one God, the Triune God, and every created thing lives in awe of His mystery.^{[174](#)}

Jesuit Nicholas Russo defended the Catholic view in 1886:

In honoring Mary, what else are we doing but imitating the heavenly messenger who saluted her as full of grace, united to God [“the Lord is with thee”], blessed among women? What are all the praises which the Church offers to Mary . . . but a faint commentary on the words of the archangel? What is the veneration we have for her but the fulfillment of the prophecy made by our heavenly Mother herself when, filled with the Holy Ghost, magnifying the Lord and extolling His mercy, she exclaimed: “All generations shall call me blessed”? (Luke 1:43). To suppress our feelings, therefore, would not only be inconsistent with the filial love we should have for her, but would also contradict the clear teaching of the Gospel.^{[175](#)}

Archbishop Fulton Sheen, well known for his 1950s television sermons, eloquently wrote:

There is, actually, only one person in all humanity of whom God has one

picture, and in whom there is a perfect conformity between what He wanted her to be and what she is, and that is His own Mother. Most of us are a minus sign, in the sense that we do not fulfill the high hopes the Heavenly Father has for us. But Mary is the equal sign. The ideal that God had of her — that she *is*, and in the flesh. The model and the copy are perfect; she is all that was foreseen, planned, and dreamed. The melody of her life is played, just as it was written. Mary was thought, conceived, and planned as the equal sign between ideal and history, thought and reality, hope and realization. . . .

As Eden was the Paradise of Creation, Mary is the Paradise of the Incarnation, and in her as a Garden was celebrated the first nuptials of God and man. The closer one gets to fire, the greater the heat; the closer one is to God, the greater the purity. But since no one was ever closer to God than the woman whose human portals He threw open to walk this earth, then no one could have been more pure than she. . . .

She is the one whom every man loves when he loves a woman — whether he knows it or not. She is what every woman wants to be, when she looks at herself. . . . She is the secret desire every woman has to be honored and fostered; she is the way every woman wants to command respect and love because of the beauty of her goodness of body and soul. . . . This Dream Woman . . . is the one of whom every heart can say in its depth of depths: “She is the Woman I love!” . . . [176](#)

The key to understanding Mary is this: We do not start with Mary. We start with Christ, the Son of the living God! The less we think of Him, the less we think of her; the more we think of Him, the more we think of her; the more we adore His Divinity, the more we venerate her Motherhood; the less we adore His Divinity, the less reason we have for respecting her. . . .

No one . . . who thinks logically about Christ can understand such a question as: “Why do you speak so often of His Mother?”...

It may be objected: “Our Lord is enough for me. I have no need of her.” But *He* needed her, whether we do or not. And what is more important, Our Blessed Lord gave us His Mother as *our* Mother. . . .

Mary is a window through which our humanity first catches a glimpse of Divinity on earth. Or perhaps she is more like a magnifying glass that intensifies our love of her Son, and makes our prayers more bright and burning.

God, Who made the sun, also made the moon. The moon does not take away from the brilliance of the sun. The moon would only be a burnt-out cinder floating in the immensity of space, were it not for the sun. All its light is reflected from the sun. The Blessed Mother reflects her Divine Son; without Him, she is nothing. With Him, she is the Mother of Men.^{[177](#)}

Protestants (and many Catholics as well) are often concerned about abuses in the practice of Marian devotion. Wholly apart from the question of the exact nature of the Catholic Church's teaching about Mary, it must be admitted (and is, by many Catholic writers) that excesses in language and practice have indeed regrettably occurred too often among individual Catholics. Granting this, at the same time, much of the veneration and verbal praises directed toward Mary have to be understood as poetic utterances — not usually to be interpreted literally, just as the love letters of those in the midst of new romance have their own unique language, which everyone understands and accordingly takes into account.

Furthermore, it is also true that insufficient attention is paid to the many instances through the centuries of papal and conciliar censures of such abuses. For example, in our own time, both the Second Vatican Council^{[178](#)} and Pope Paul VI^{[179](#)} have addressed this issue frankly and directly, often with Protestant perceptions and objections in mind.

In any event, an ecumenical and scriptural understanding of the Blessed Virgin Mary and her place within Catholicism and Christianity must begin with the actual dogmas of Catholicism, which are “in the books” to be examined by one and all. These beliefs are often misunderstood, and it is the Catholic apologist's task to clarify painstakingly the Marian doctrines of his Church and to rectify the common, longstanding misconstructions of them.

Definition: Mary the “Mother of God” (Theotokos)

The official, dogmatic proclamation of this dogma was made at the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus in 431, in response to the heresy of Nestorianism, which expressly denied that Mary was *Theotokos* (literally, “God-bearer”), and held, rather, that Mary was only the mother of the man Jesus (*Christotokos*). The term *Theotokos* had been used at least as early as Origen (d. c. 254) and was in common use soon after his lifetime. The Council of Ephesus officially approved the *Second Letter of Cyril of Alexandria to Nestorius* as its definition on this matter. It reads in part as follows:

It was not that an ordinary man was born first of the holy Virgin, on whom afterward the Word descended; what we say is that, being united with the flesh from the womb, [the Word] has undergone birth in the flesh, making the birth in the flesh His own. . . . Thus [the holy Fathers] have unhesitatingly called the holy Virgin “Mother of God” [*Theotokos*]. This does not mean that the nature of the Word or His divinity received the beginning of its existence from the holy Virgin, but that, since the holy body, animated by a rational soul, which the Word united to Himself according to the hypostasis, was born from her, the Word was born according to the flesh. [180](#)

Scriptural evidence: Mary the “Mother of God” (Theotokos)

Ludwig Ott, in his systematic summary of Catholic dogma, contends:

Scripture implicitly affirms Mary’s Divine motherhood by attesting, on the one hand, the true Divinity of Christ, and on the other hand, Mary’s true motherhood. Thus Mary is called: “Mother of Jesus” (John 2:1) . . . “Mother of the Lord” (Luke 1:43). Mary’s true motherhood is clearly foretold by the Prophet Isaiah: “Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel” (Isaiah 7:14). . . . The woman who bore the Son of God is the Progenitress of God, or the Mother of God [see also Matt. 1:18, 12:46, 13:55; Luke 1:31, 35; Gal. 4:4]. [181](#)

The doctrine of Mary as *Theotokos* flows consistently and straightforwardly from the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity, the Son, Jesus. Cardinal Gibbons explains:

We affirm that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Word of God, who in His divine nature is from all eternity begotten of the Father, consubstantial with Him, was in the fullness of time again begotten, by being born of the Virgin, thus taking to Himself, from her maternal womb, a human nature of the same substance with hers.

But it may be said the Blessed Virgin is not the Mother of the Divinity. She had not, and she could not have, any part in the generation of the Word of God, for that generation is eternal; her maternity is temporal. He is her Creator; she is His creature. Style her, if you will, the Mother of the man Jesus or even of the human nature of the Son of God, but not the Mother of God.

I shall answer this objection by putting a question. Did the mother who bore us have any part in the production of our *soul*? Was not this nobler part of our being the work of God alone? And yet who would for a moment dream of saying “the mother of my body,” and not “*my* mother”? . . .

In like manner . . . the Blessed Virgin, under the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost, by communicating to the Second Person of the Adorable Trinity, as mothers do, a true human nature of the same substance with her own, is thereby really and truly His Mother.

It is in this sense that the title “Mother of God,” denied by Nestorius, was vindicated to her by the General Council of Ephesus, in 431; in this sense, and in no other, has the Church called her by that title.

Hence, by immediate and necessary consequence, follow her surpassing dignity and excellence.^{[182](#)}

Cardinal Newman elaborates:

There was in the first ages no public and ecclesiastical recognition of the place which St. Mary holds in the Economy of grace; this was reserved for the fifth century, as the definition of our Lord’s proper Divinity had been the work of the fourth. . . . In order to do honor to Christ, in order to defend the true doctrine of the Incarnation, in order to secure a right faith in the manhood of the Eternal Son, the Council of Ephesus determined the

Blessed Virgin to be the Mother of God. . . .

But the spontaneous or traditional feeling of Christians had in great measure anticipated the formal ecclesiastical decision. Thus the title *Theotokos*, or “Mother of God,” was familiar to Christians from primitive times, and had been used, among other writers, by Origen, Eusebius, St. Alexander, St. Athanasius, St. Ambrose, St. Gregory Nazianzen, St. Gregory Nyssen, and St. Nilus.^{[183](#)}

Definition: the Immaculate Conception of Mary

Pope Pius IX (in the papal bull *Ineffabilis Deus*) infallibly defined this doctrine as binding upon all Catholics on December 8, 1854:

We declare, pronounce, and define: the doctrine which holds that the most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by the singular grace and privilege of almighty God and in view of the merits of Christ Jesus the Savior of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of Original Sin, is revealed by God and, therefore, firmly and constantly to be believed by all the faithful.^{[184](#)}

Scriptural evidence: the Immaculate Conception of Mary

Genesis 3:15 (known as the “Protoevangelion”): “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

Ludwig Ott expounds this verse:

The *literal sense* of the passage is possibly the following: Between Satan and his followers on the one hand, and Eve and her posterity on the other hand, there is to be constant moral warfare. The posterity of Eve will achieve a complete and final victory over Satan and his followers, even if it is wounded in the struggle. The posterity of Eve includes the Messiah, in whose power humanity will win a victory over Satan. Thus the passage is

indirectly messianic.

The seed of the woman was understood as referring to the Redeemer, and thus the Mother of the Redeemer came to be seen in the woman. Since the second century, this direct messianic-marian interpretation has been expounded by individual Fathers, for example, St. Irenaeus, St. Epiphanius . . . St. Cyprian . . . St. Leo the Great. However, it is not found in the writings of the majority of the Fathers. . . . According to this interpretation, Mary stands with Christ in a perfect and victorious enmity toward Satan and his following. Many of the later scholastics and a great many modern theologians argue, in the light of this interpretation . . . that Mary's victory over Satan would not have been perfect, if she had ever been under his dominion. Consequently she must have entered this world without the stain of Original Sin.¹⁸⁵

Luke 1:28: “And he [the angel Gabriel — Luke 1:26-27] came to her, and said, ‘Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you!’ ”

Most Protestant Bible translations follow the King James, or Authorized, Version's lead in rendering *kecharitomene*, the Greek word, as “favored,” as indeed also some recent Catholic versions (New American, Jerusalem). The favored (no pun intended!) traditional Catholic rendering (actually the more literal rendering) is “Hail, full of grace” (for example, Douay, Confraternity, Knox). The word *Mary* (after *hail*) is not in the text, but strongly implied, as the angel is addressing her by title; thus we arrive at the phrase “Hail, Mary, full of grace,” the beginning of the quintessential Catholic devotional prayer (another portion of it can be found at Luke 1:42).

In responding to the Protestant charge, often put forth, that “full of grace” is impermissible and indicative of Catholic bias, we cite two reputable Protestant linguistic sources to the contrary:

An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, by W. E. Vine, makes a very interesting observation:

Charitoo: akin to *charis*, to endow with *charis*, primarily signified to make graceful or gracious, and came to denote, in Hellenistic Greek, to cause to find favor, Luke 1:28, “highly favored” (margin, “endued with grace”). . . .

Grace implies more than favor; grace is a free gift, favor may be deserved or gained.^{[186](#)}

Vine has here given a thoroughly Catholic view on this verse and what it tells us about Mary. For by saying that “grace is a free gift,” he shows that the traditional Catholic rendering clearly makes Mary’s Immaculate Conception entirely unmerited on her part — a sheer act of mercy and grace performed solely by God. “Favor,” on the other hand, the preferred Protestant translation, may imply something “deserved or gained.” Thus, by a great irony, the Protestant Bibles are more likely to be misinterpreted in the sense that Mary has *earned* this gift, a notion expressly denied by Catholic theology and dogmatic pronouncements.

Whichever translation one prefers (this is not necessarily an either-or proposition), it is certain that *kecharitomene* is directly concerned with the idea of “grace,” since, as Vine noted, it is derived from the root word *charis*, whose literal meaning is “grace.” *Charis* is translated by the King James Version, for example, 129 times (out of 150 total appearances) as “grace.”

Likewise, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* expounds Luke 1:28 as follows:

“Highly favored” (*kecharitomene*). Perfect passive participle of *charitoo* and means endowed with grace (*charis*), enriched with grace as in Ephesians 1:6. . . . The Vulgate *gratiae plena* “is right, if it means ‘full of grace which thou hast received’; wrong, if it means ‘full of grace which thou hast to bestow’ ” (Plummer).^{[187](#)}

The Catholic belief is precisely the former option, which Robertson’s approved source has deemed “right.”

Another important aspect of Luke 1:28 should be noted. The angel is here, in effect, giving Mary a new name (“full of grace”). As was mentioned earlier, the word *Mary* does not appear in the text. It was as if the angel were addressing Abraham “Hail, full of faith,” or Solomon “Hail, full of wisdom” (characteristics for which they were particularly noteworthy). The biblical and Hebraic understanding of one’s name was quite profound. God was very particular in naming individuals himself (e.g., Gen. 17:5, 15, 19; Isa. 45:3-4;

Matt. 1:21). God renamed persons to indicate regeneration (as in Gen. 17:5, 15; 32:28) or condemnation (as in Jer. 20:3). For the ancient Hebrews, names signified the character, nature, and qualities of a person and were much more than mere identifying labels. Thus, God chose his Son's name (Matt. 1:21).

As a passing speculation, it is interesting that the meaning of the Hebrew *Miriam* (Greek, *Mariam*, or "Mary") is very uncertain, according to etymologists. It may be that the angel is giving the name its definitive meaning in Luke 1:28: one who is characterized as being "full of grace."

It is permissible, on Greek grammatical and linguistic grounds, to paraphrase *kecharitomene* as completely, perfectly, enduringly endowed with grace.¹⁸⁸ Thus, in just this one verse, pregnant with meaning and far-reaching implications, the uniqueness of Mary is strongly indicated, and the Immaculate Conception can rightly be deemed entirely consistent with the meaning of this passage.

The Bible speaks only implicitly of many things that Protestants strongly believe, such as the proper mode of Baptism (immersion, sprinkling, or pouring?). The Immaculate Conception is entirely possible within scriptural presuppositions.

Luke 1:35 (The Annunciation; Mary as a type of the ark of the covenant):
"And the angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.' "

Overshadow is derived from the Greek, *episkiasei*, which denotes a bright cloud or cloud of glory. It is used in reference to the cloud at the transfiguration of Jesus (Matt. 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:34) and hearkens back to instances of the *Shekinah* glory of God in the Old Testament (Exod. 24:15-16, 40:34-38; 1 Kings 8:10).

The Septuagint uses *episkiasei* in Exodus 40:34-35. Mary, as *Theotokos*, becomes, in effect, the new temple and holy of holies, where God dwelt in a special, spatially located fashion. In particular, Scripture seems to be making a direct symbolic parallelism between Mary and the ark of the covenant. She is the bearer and ark of the New Covenant, which Jesus brings about (Heb.

8:6-13; 12:24).

The ark of the old covenant was constructed according to meticulous instructions from God (Exod. 25:9; 39:42-43). How much more perfect must the “God-bearer” be, who would carry in her womb God made flesh, the eternal *Logos*, or “Word” of God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity?

Thus, when the ark and its surrounding sacred items were completed, the glory cloud of God descended and “covered” the tabernacle, in which the ark was kept, and Moses could not even enter (Exod. 40:34-35). This a direct parallel to Luke 1:35. A very similar occurrence can be found in 1 Kings 8:4-11 (especially 8:10-11), when the ark is brought to the newly completed temple.

Another parallel is seen in the comparison of King David’s words upon seeing the recently regained ark (2 Sam. 6:9) and Elizabeth’s exclamation upon seeing Mary (Luke 1:43). Also, the people of Jerusalem shouted with joy on the same occasion (2 Sam. 6:15), while Elizabeth also reacted with a “loud cry” to Mary (Luke 1:42), saying, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!”

Furthermore, as David leapt for joy when the ark was brought to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:14-16; cf. 1 Chron. 15:29), so did John the Baptist in Elizabeth’s womb when the ark of the New Covenant was near (Luke 1:44). It was what each ark contained (the written and incarnated Word of God) that caused the joy in each case, and that is the whole point of the Catholic veneration of Mary.

Finally, there is another parallel of three-month stays in the hill country of Judea, of the ark of the old covenant (2 Sam. 6:10-12) and of Mary, the ark of the New Covenant (Luke 1:39-45, 56).

Perhaps a bit more reflection on the nature of the ark, the tabernacle, and the temple will be helpful at this point, to reveal the profundity of the parallelism between these “holy places,” where God is “specially” present (after all, he is omnipresent), and the Blessed Virgin, in whom God in the flesh first chose to take up his earthly abode.

By analyzing the similarities, one can see how Mary's Immaculate Conception is altogether in keeping with the typology of Scripture in this regard, and quite appropriate and fitting for one who was granted the unfathomable honor of being chosen as the Mother of God.

The temple site was very sacred and holy (1 Chron. 29:3; Isa. 11:9, 56:7, 64:10), as were its various rooms and areas and all its sacred objects (Ezek. 42:13, 46:19; Isa. 62:9), and the city of Jerusalem itself (Neh. 11:1,18; Isaiah 48:2). Of course, the ground of Mt. Sinai was holy due to God's peculiar presence (Exod. 3:5), and God's presence in the Israelite camp rendered it holy (Deut. 23:14).

The presence of God always imparted holiness (Deut. 7:6, 26:19; Jer. 2:3). Even God's "holy name" was thought by the Jews to constitute his actual presence with them (Lev. 20:3, 22:2; 1 Chron. 16:10). When something was holy, it then partook of God's own holiness. Angels are called "holy ones" precisely because of their proximity to God (Job 5:1; Ps. 89:6-7).

The furnishings of the tabernacle, a portable sacred tent that prefigured and preceded the temple, were not to be touched by the Levites (or anyone else, save for a select few priests), on pain of death (Num. 1:51-53; 2:17; 4:15). Likewise, the ark, which was carried on poles inserted through rings on its edges, was so holy that it could not be touched.

On one occasion, the ark was about to fall over when being transported, and one Uzziah (seemingly with the purest motives) reached out to steady it. He was immediately struck dead (2 Sam. 6:2-7). The men of Beth-shemesh also died when they merely looked inside the ark (1 Sam. 6:19; cf. Exod. 33:20).

The Temple in Jerusalem (actually, three in succession) was simply the permanent structure based on the plan of the tabernacle, with outer courts, priest's courts, an altar, and the innermost holy sanctuary, the "holy of holies." The ark of the covenant was placed inside the holy of holies in the first (Solomon's) Temple, but was lost after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Babylonians, led by Nebuchadnezzar, in 587 B.C.

Israelite priests were subject to very strict demands regarding marriage and ritual purity (Lev. 21-22), especially the high priest (Lev. 21:10-15). The holy

of holies could be entered only by the high priest, and only on the yearly Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), with appropriate reverential precautions (Lev. 16; Num. 29:8).

In Leviticus 16:2, 13, the high priest is warned properly to observe instructions “that he die not.” The Jews used to tie a rope to the ankle of the high priest on Yom Kippur, so that they could safely pull him out if he was disobedient in some respect and died in the holy of holies. God dwelt above the mercy seat on top of the ark, between the two cherubim (Exod. 25:22).

Just before the Israelites were to receive the Ten Commandments, God made a spectacular appearance at Mt. Sinai (Exod. 19-20), accompanied, as usual in Scripture, by fire and a cloud (“smoke,” Exod. 19:18). He warned the people not even to touch the mountain, or its “border,” under penalty of death (Exod. 19:12-13). Even animals were included in the restriction.

The point of all this digression is to illustrate how God regards people and also inanimate objects that are to come in close contact with Him. Cruel as it may seem from our vantage point, the severity of death as the consequence of disrespect or disobedience was necessary to make absolutely clear how awesome and majestic God’s holiness is.

The strictness of the ceremonial Law was to change, of course, with the arrival of the Messiah and the New Covenant, but the Old Testament principle of “holiness/separate unto the Lord” remained. Mary, because of her ineffable physical and spiritual relationship with God the Son, the Holy Spirit (as “spouse,” so to speak), and God the Father (“the Daughter of Zion” typology), necessarily had to be granted the grace of sinlessness from conception, just as all of us must be cleansed utterly in order to be present with God in all his fullness in Heaven (see, e.g., 1 Cor. 3:13-17; 1 John 3:3-9; Rev. 21:27).

The Immaculate Conception is merely the supreme, glorious realization of the notion that leaps out from practically every page of Scripture from beginning to end: that God is holy, and the closer we get to him, the more we must be holy.

Lest anyone wrongly think that arguments such as the above, from “types and

shadows,” are a peculiar form of “Romish excess,” the biblical examples in the table on the opposite page should suffice to show the commonness of such types in Scripture.

Many factors can be deduced, when considering all of the above scriptural indications of the Immaculate Conception. Cardinal Gibbons pointed out many parallels between the sinless Blessed Virgin Mary and other biblical figures:

Whenever God designs any person for some important work, He bestows on that person the graces and dispositions necessary for faithfully discharging it. . . .

The Prophet Jeremiah was sanctified from his very birth because he was destined to be the herald of God’s law to the children of Israel: “Before I formed thee in the bowels of thy mother, I knew thee, and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee” (Jer. 1:5). . . .

John the Baptist was “filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother’s womb” (Luke 1:15). He was “a burning and a shining light” (John 5:35) because he was chosen to prepare the way of the Lord.

Type/Shadow/Figure Fulfillment/Parallel

Colossians 2:16-17: Food, Sabbath	“Shadow of things to come”
Hebrews 9:8-12, 24: High Priest and the tabernacle	Christ as High Priest/Heaven
Hebrews 10:1: the Law	The New Covenant
Romans 5:14/ 1 Corinthians 15:45-49: Adam	Christ (the second Adam)
Galatians 4:22-31: Isaac and Ishmael (sons of Abraham)	Children of “the flesh” and of “promise”/“after the Spirit”
1 Peter 3:19-21: Noah’s Ark and the flood	The Church and Baptism
Exodus 12:21-28: Passover lamb slain for Israel’s sins	Christ the Lamb slain for the sins of mankind (Revelation 5:6, 9; John 1:29)

Moses (delivered Israel from the bondage of slavery)	Jesus Christ (delivers mankind from the bondage of sin)
Circumcision (infant rite for initiation as one of God's "chosen people")	Baptism (infant rite for initiation into God's family)
The creation before the Fall, the ark of the Covenant, and Eve	Mary as Immaculate, "bearer of God," and as "spiritual mother" and representative of the human race

The Apostles received the plenitude of grace; they were endowed with the gift of tongues and other privileges (Acts 2) before they commenced the work of the ministry. Hence St. Paul says: "Our sufficiency is from God, who hath made us fit ministers of the New Testament" (2 Cor. 3:5-6) [other translations have *able, competent, qualified*]....

There is none who filled any position so exalted, so sacred, as is the incommunicable office of Mother of Jesus; and there is no one, consequently, that needed so high a degree of holiness as she did.

For, if God thus sanctified His Prophets and Apostles as being destined to be the bearers of the Word of life, how much more sanctified must Mary have been, who was to bear the Lord and "Author of life" (Acts 3:5)? . . . If God said to His Priests of old: "Be ye clean, you that carry the vessels of the Lord" (Isa. 3:2); nay, if the vessels themselves used in the divine service and churches are set apart by special consecration, we cannot conceive Mary to have been ever profaned by sin, who was the chosen vessel of election, even the Mother of God. [189](#)

It is clearly untrue to maintain — as many do — that God is the only sinless being. Adam and Eve were created sinless and would and could have remained so — but for their disobedience and the Fall. Likewise, the angels in Heaven began their existence without sin and have even remained so. Saints in Heaven are made completely sinless (Rev. 14:5; 21:27).

And Mary needed a Savior just as much as the rest of us. She was fully aware of that necessity (Luke 1:47). The difference between Mary and other ultimately saved persons is that they had all fallen into the filthy pit of sin,

whereas she had not. But she certainly *would* have, too, if it were not for God's special act of grace whereby she was conceived immaculate and spared from the inheritance of Original Sin. God redeemed us from the pit, but prevented her from falling into it. In both cases, it is proper to speak of God as having "saved" his creatures "from the pit." As the proverb goes, "Prevention is the best cure."

In fact, Mary was saved more out of absolute grace than anyone ever was, so that it is altogether unfounded to charge the Catholic Church with undermining the doctrine of free grace by virtue of her Marian beliefs. For all the Church is saying with regard to Mary's Immaculate Conception is what Calvinists and many other Protestants claim for all saved individuals: grace that is efficacious wholly apart from our cooperation.

In Mary's case, the grace began without any possibility whatever of her own merit, since it was from the moment of conception, when she had not as yet a free will to choose one way or the other! Later on, she did indeed truly cooperate with God (Luke 1:38)^{[190](#)} and was free of actual sin by choice,^{[191](#)} but at first, the grace came with no possibility of her even accepting or rejecting it. Thus, Protestant objections on this score are utterly unfounded, for everything that Mary is, derives entirely from God's free grace and providential will.^{[192](#)} Far from being idolatry, the veneration accorded Mary by the Catholic is merely an acknowledgment of the glory promised by God (through the work of Jesus Christ) to all his redeemed creatures.^{[193](#)}

Cardinal Newman was puzzled by some of the objections to the Immaculate Conception. He wrote, with characteristically brilliant, rhetorical prose, a piece intended as a counterargument:

Does not the objector consider that *Eve* was created, or born, *without* Original Sin? Why does not *this* shock him? Would he have been inclined to *worship* Eve in that first estate of hers? Why, then, Mary?

Does he not believe that St. John the Baptist had the grace of God, i.e., was regenerated, even before his birth? What do we believe of Mary, but that grace was given her at a still earlier period? *All* we say is that grace was given her from the first moment of her existence.

We do not say that she did not owe her salvation to the death of her Son. Just the contrary, we say that she, of all mere children of Adam, is in the truest sense the fruit and purchase of His Passion. He has done for her more than for anyone else. To others He gives grace and regeneration at a *point* in their earthly existence; to her, from the very beginning.

We do not make her *nature* different from others. . . . Certainly she *would* have been a frail being, like Eve, *without* the grace of God. . . . It was not her *nature* which secured her perseverance, but the excess of grace which hindered Nature acting as Nature ever will act. There is no difference in *kind* between her and us, though an inconceivable difference of *degree*. She and we are both simply saved by the grace of Christ.

Thus, sincerely speaking, I really do not see *what* the difficulty is. . . . The above statement is no private statement of my own. I never heard of any Catholic who ever had any other view. . . .

Consider what I have said. Is it, after all, *certainly* irrational? Is it *certainly* against Scripture? Is it *certainly* against the primitive Fathers? Is it *certainly* idolatrous? I cannot help smiling as I put the questions. . . .

Many, many doctrines are far harder than the Immaculate Conception. The doctrine of Original Sin is indefinitely harder. Mary just has *not* this difficulty. It is *no* difficulty to believe that a soul is united to the flesh *without* Original Sin; the great mystery is that any, that millions on millions, are born with it. Our teaching about Mary has just one difficulty less than our teaching about the state of mankind generally.^{[194](#)}

Finally, the English bishop William Ullathorne (1806-1889), a friend of Newman, wrote eloquently in a book on this subject that was published originally a year after the dogma was proclaimed:

It is the divine maternity of Mary which explains both her perfect excellence and her perfect holiness. It is the key to all her gifts and privileges. For the excellence of each creature is to be found in the degree in which it resembles its Creator. . . .

Mary was made as like to Him [Christ], as being a mere creature, she could

be made. For, having no earthly father, our Lord bore the human likeness of His mother in all His features. Or rather, she bore His likeness. And as, for thirty years of His life, her mind was the law which directed His obedience, and her will the guide which regulated His actions, her soul was the perfect reflection of His conduct.

And as all created holiness is derived from Jesus, and from the degree of our union with Jesus, of which union His sacred and life-giving flesh is the great instrument; we may understand something of the perfect holiness of the Mother of God, from the perfection of her union with her Son. For He was formed by the Holy Ghost of her flesh. And His blood, that saving blood which redeemed the world, was taken from her heart. And whilst the Godhead dwelt bodily in Him, He, for nine months, dwelt bodily in her. And all that time . . . the stream which nourished the growth of life in Jesus flowed from the heart of Mary, and, at each pulsation, flowed back again, and re-entered His Mother's heart, enriching her with His divinest spirit. How pregnant is that blood of His with sanctifying grace, one drop of which might have redeemed the world. . . . Next to that union by which Jesus is God and man in one person, there is no union so intimate as that of a mother with her child. . . .

Certainly, He who preserved the three children from being touched by the fire in the midst of which they walked uninjured, and who preserved the bush unconsumed in the midst of a burning flame, could preserve Mary untouched from the burning fuel of concupiscence. He who took up Elijah in the fiery chariot, so that he tasted not of death, could, in the chariot of His ardent love, set Mary on high above the law of sin. . . . And He who held back the waves of that Jordan, that the ark of the Old Testament might pass untouched and honored through its bed, could hold back the wave of Adam, lest it overflow the ark of the New Testament beneath its defiling floods. For that we are born in the crime of Adam and with Original Sin, is not the result of absolute necessity, but of the divine will. And if He who ordained this penalty, had already solved it in part, when ere His birth, He sanctified the holy Precursor of His Coming; much more could he solve it altogether when He sanctified His holy Mother.

For He who could have limited Adam's sin unto himself, can ward off that

sin from Mary. And what He could, that He willed to do. For why should He not have willed it?^{[195](#)}

Definition: the Assumption of Mary

Pope Pius XII, in his Apostolic Constitution, *Munificentissimus Deus*, of November 1, 1950, proclaimed this dogma in the following carefully selected words:

By the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the blessed apostles Peter and Paul, and by our own authority, we proclaim, declare, and define as a dogma revealed by God: the Immaculate Mother of God, Mary ever Virgin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into the glory of Heaven.^{[196](#)}

Scriptural evidence: the Assumption of Mary

Ludwig Ott presents some of the biblical indications of the Assumption:

Direct and express scriptural proofs are not to be had. The possibility of the bodily assumption before the second coming of Christ is not excluded by 1 Corinthians 15:23, as the objective Redemption was completed with the sacrificial death of Christ, and the beginning of the final era foretold by the prophets commenced. Its probability is suggested by Matthew 27:52-53: "And the graves were opened: and many bodies of the saints that had slept arose, and coming out of the tombs after His Resurrection came into the holy city and appeared to many." According to the more probable explanation, which was already expounded by the Fathers, the awakening of the "saints" was a final resurrection and transfiguration. If, however, the justified of the Old Covenant were called to the perfection of salvation immediately after the conclusion of the redemptive work of Christ, then it is possible and probable that the Mother of the Lord was called to it also.

From her fullness of grace spoken of in Luke 1:28, Scholastic theology derives the doctrine of the bodily assumption and glorification of Mary. Since she was full of grace, she remained preserved from the three-fold curse of sin (Gen. 3:16-19), as well as from her return to dust. . . .

Modern theology usually cites Genesis 3:15 in support of the doctrine. Since by “the seed of the woman” it understands Christ, and by “the woman,” Mary, it is argued that as Mary had an intimate share in Christ’s battle against Satan and in His victory over Satan and sin, she must also have participated intimately in His victory over death. It is true that the literal reference of the text is to Eve and not Mary, but already since the end of the second century (St. Justin), Tradition has seen in Mary the new Eve.^{[197](#)}

Lest one think that a bodily ascent into Heaven (of a creature, as opposed to Jesus) is impossible and “biblically unthinkable,” Holy Scripture contains the examples of Enoch (Heb. 11:5; cf. Gen. 5:24), Elijah (2 Kings 2:1, 11), St. Paul’s being caught up to the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2-4), possibly bodily, and events during the Second Coming (1 Thess. 4:15-17), believed by many Evangelicals to constitute the “Rapture,” an additional return of Christ for believers only. All of these occur by virtue of the power of God, not the intrinsic ability of the persons.

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin flows of necessity from the Immaculate Conception and Mary’s actual sinlessness. Bodily death and decay are the result of sin and the Fall (Gen. 3:19; Ps. 16:10). Thus, the absence of actual sin and Original Sin “breaks the chain” and allows for instant bodily resurrection and also immortality, just as God intended for all human beings.

Christ achieved a triple victory over the Devil (Heb. 2:14-18). Mary (as foretold in Gen. 3:15) shared in this triumph of her Son, Jesus: over sin, through her Immaculate Conception; over concupiscence and inordinate sexual desire, by her virginal motherhood; and over death, by her glorious Assumption.

Jesus’ Resurrection brings forth the possibility of universal resurrection (1 Cor. 15:13, 16), which is why he is called the “first fruits” (1 Cor. 15:20-23).

Mary's Assumption is the "first fruits," sign, and type of the general resurrection of all mankind, so that she represents the age to come, in which death and sin will be conquered once and for all (1 Cor. 15:26). The Assumption is, therefore, directly the result of Christ's own victory over sin and death. It, too, has a Christocentric meaning, in the same way as the Immaculate Conception and the designation *Theotokos*.

Cardinal Newman made several remarkable observations concerning the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary:

Not till the end of the fourth century did the Church declare the divinity of the Holy Ghost. . . . *Of course* it was held by implication, since the Holy Trinity was believed from the first — but I mean the bare absolute proposition "The Holy Ghost is God." . . . The Assumption of our Lady is more pointedly and in express words held by all Catholics, and has been for a thousand years, than the proposition "The Holy Ghost is God" was held by the Catholic world in St. Basil's time. There has been a gradual evolution of Apostolic doctrine or dogma, as delivered from our Lord to the Church. If the Assumption of our Blessed Lady were now defined at the Vatican Council [1870], I should say that plainly it, as the Immaculate Conception, is contained in the dogma "Mary the Second Eve." . . .

If Mary is like Eve but greater, then, as Eve would not have seen death or corruption, so while Mary underwent death because she was a child of fallen Adam, she did not see corruption because she had more than the prerogatives of Eve.^{[198](#)}

Who can conceive, my brethren, that God should so repay the debt, which He condescended to owe to His Mother, for the elements of His human body, as to allow the flesh and blood from which it was taken to molder in the grave? . . . Or who can conceive that that virginal frame, which never sinned, was to undergo the death of a sinner? Why should she share the curse of Adam who had no share in his fall?... She died, then, as we hold, because even our Lord and Savior died. . . . She died. . . not. . . because of sin, but to submit herself to her condition, to glorify God, to do what her Son did. . . .

She, the Lily of Eden, who had always dwelt out of the sight of man,

fittingly did she die in the garden's shade, and amid the sweet flowers in which she had lived. Her departure made no noise in the world. . . . They sought for her relics, but they found them not. . . . Her tomb could not be pointed out, or if it was found, it was open.¹⁹⁹

Finally, Archbishop Fulton Sheen movingly sums up the profundity of Mary's glorious Assumption into Heaven:

Shall she, as the garden in which grew the lily of divine sinlessness and the red rose of the passion of redemption, be delivered over to the weeds and be forgotten by the Heavenly Gardener? . . .

Neither would Omnipotence, Who tabernacled Himself within Mary, consent to see His fleshly home subjected to the dissolution of the tomb. . . .

Eat the food of earth, and one dies; eat the Eucharist, and one lives eternally. She, who is the mother of the Eucharist, escapes the decomposition of death. . . .

Mary always seems to be the Advent of what is in store for man. She anticipates Christ for nine months, as she bears Heaven within her; she anticipates His Passion at Cana, and His Church at Pentecost. Now, in the last great Doctrine of the Assumption, she anticipates heavenly glory, and the definition comes at a time when men think of it least.²⁰⁰

Definition: the perpetual virginity of Mary

Pope Paul IV, in his Constitution, *Cum Quorundam Hominum*, of 1555, expressed the constant teaching of the Catholic Church concerning both the virgin birth of Jesus Christ and the perpetual virginity of Mary:

We question and admonish all those who . . . have asserted, taught, and believed . . . that our Lord . . . was not conceived from the Holy Spirit according to the flesh in the womb of the Blessed Mary ever Virgin but, as other men, from the seed of Joseph . . . or that the same Blessed Virgin

Mary is not truly the mother of God and did not retain her virginity intact before the birth, in the birth, and perpetually after the birth.^{[201](#)}

Scriptural evidence: the perpetual virginity of Mary

The Greek word for *brother* in the New Testament is *adelphos*. The well-known Protestant linguistic reference *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* defines it as follows:

Adelphos: denotes a brother, or near kinsman; in the plural, a community based on identity of origin or life. It is used of:

1. male children of the same parents . . .
2. male descendants of the same parents, Acts 7:23, 26; Hebrews 7:5 . . .
4. people of the same nationality, Acts 3:17, 22; Romans 9:3 . . .
5. any man, a neighbor, Luke 10:29; Matthew 5:22, 7:3;
6. persons united by a common interest, Matthew 5:47;
7. persons united by a common calling, Revelation 22:9;
8. mankind, Matthew 25:40; Hebrews 2:17;
9. the disciples, and so, by implication, all believers, Matthew 28:10; John 20:17;
10. believers, apart from sex, Matthew 23:8; Acts 1:15; Romans 1:13; 1 Thessalonians 1:4; Revelation 19:10 (the word *sisters* is used of believers, only in 1 Timothy 5:2)....^{[202](#)}

It is evident, therefore, from the range of possible definitions of *adelphos*, that Jesus' "brothers" need not necessarily be siblings of Jesus on linguistic grounds, as many commentators, learned and unlearned, seem to assume uncritically. By examining the use of *adelphos* and related words in Hebrew,

and by comparing Scripture with Scripture (“exegesis”), one can determine the most sensible explanation of all the biblical data taken collectively. Many examples prove that *adelphos* has a very wide variety of meanings:

- In the King James Version, Jacob is called the “brother” of his Uncle Laban (Gen. 29:15; 29:10). The same thing occurs with regard to Lot and Abraham (Gen. 14:14; 11:26-27). The Revised Standard Version uses “kinsman” at 29:15 and 14:14.
- Use of *brother* or *brethren* for mere kinsmen: Deuteronomy 23:7; 2 Samuel 1:26; 1 Kings 9:13, 20:32; 2 Kings 10:13-14; Jeremiah 34:9; Amos 1:9.
- Neither Hebrew nor Aramaic has a word for *cousin*. Although the New Testament was written in Greek, which does have such a word, the literal rendering of the Hebrew word *ach*, which was used by the first disciples and Jesus, is indeed *adelphos*, the literal equivalent of the English “brother.” But even in English, *brother* has multiple meanings as well.

Moving on to more direct biblical evidences of the perpetual virginity of Mary, we discover the following facts:

- In Luke 2:41-51, the story of Mary and Joseph’s taking Jesus to the Temple at the age of twelve, it is fairly obvious that Jesus is the only child. Since everyone agrees he was the first child of Mary, if there were up to five or more siblings, as some maintain (arguing, for example, from Matthew 13:55), they were nowhere to be found at this time. This passage alone furnishes a strong argument for the implausibility of the “literal brothers” theory.
- Jesus himself uses *brethren* in the larger sense. In Matthew 23:8 he calls the “crowds” and his “disciples” (23:1) “brethren.” In other words, they are *each other’s* “brothers” (that is, the brotherhood of Christians). In Matthew 12:49-50 he calls his disciples and all who do the will of his Father “my brothers.”
- By comparing Matthew 27:56, Mark 15:40, and John 19:25, we find that James and Joseph — mentioned in Matthew 13:55 with Simon and Jude as Jesus’ “brothers” — are also called sons of Mary, wife of Clopas. This other Mary (Matthew 27:61, 28:1) is called our Lady’s *adelphe* in

John 19:25 (it isn't likely that there were two women named "Mary" in one family — thus even this usage apparently means "cousin" or more distant relative). Matthew 13:55 and Mark 6:3 mention Simon, Jude, and "sisters" along with James and Joseph, calling all *adelphoi*. Since we know for sure that at least James and Joseph are not Jesus' blood brothers, the most likely interpretation of Matthew 13:55 is that all these "brothers" are cousins, according to the linguistic conventions discussed above. At the very least, the term *brother* is not determinative in and of itself.

- *Firstborn*: the use of this term to assert that Mary had "second-borns" and "third-borns" proves nothing, since the primary meaning of the Greek *prototokos* is "pre-eminent." To illustrate: David is described by God as the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth (Ps. 89:27). Likewise, God refers to Ephraim (Jer. 31:9) and the nation Israel (Exod. 4:22) as "my firstborn." Jesus is called "the firstborn of all creation" in Colossians 1:15, meaning, according to all reputable Greek lexicons, that he was pre-eminent over creation, that is, the Creator. The Jewish rabbinical writers even called God the Father *Bekorah Shelolam*, meaning "firstborn." Similarly, God is called the "first" in Scripture (Isa. 41:4, 44:6, 48:12; cf. Rev. 1:8, 21:6-7). Christians are called "the firstborn" in Hebrews 12:23. Literally speaking, however, among the Jews, the firstborn was ordinarily the child who was first to open the womb (Exod. 13:2), whether there were other children or not. This is probably the meaning of Matthew 1:25, in which case, hypothetical younger children of Mary are not implied at all, contrary to the standard present-day Protestant assertions.
- Mary is committed to the care of the apostle John by Jesus from the Cross (John 19:26-27). Many Protestant interpreters agree with the Catholic view that Jesus likely would not have done this if he had had brothers (who would all have been younger than he was). Many Church Fathers held this interpretation, including St. Athanasius, St. Epiphanius, St. Hilary, St. Jerome, and St. Ambrose, and used it in the defense of Mary's perpetual virginity.
- Catholics believe that Mary's reply to the angel Gabriel's announcement that she would bear the Messiah, at the Annunciation — "How can this be, since I have no husband?" (Luke 1:34) — indicates a prior vow of perpetual virginity. St. Augustine, in his work *Holy Virginity* (4, 4),

wrote: “Surely, she would not say, ‘How shall this be?’ unless she had already vowed herself to God as a virgin. . . . If she intended to have intercourse, she wouldn’t have asked this question!”

These conclusions are not merely the result of “Catholic bias” and special pleading, as many charge. For example, the prominent Protestant *Commentary on the Whole Bible* comments on Matthew 13:55:

*An exceedingly difficult question here arises: What were these “brethren” and “sisters” to Jesus? Were they, first, His full brothers and sisters? Or, secondly, were they His stepbrothers and step-sisters, children of Joseph by a former marriage? Or, thirdly, were they His cousins, according to a common way of speaking among the Jews respecting persons of collateral descent? On this subject an immense deal has been written, nor are opinions yet by any means agreed.... In addition to other objections, many of the best interpreters . . . prefer the third opinion.... Thus dubiously we prefer to leave this vexed question, encompassed as it is with difficulties.*²⁰³

Matthew 1:24-25: “Joseph . . . knew her not until she had borne a son.”

This verse has been used as an argument that Mary did not remain a virgin after the birth of Jesus, but the same Protestant source also comments:

The word *till* does not necessarily imply that they lived on a different footing afterward (as will be evident from the use of the same word in 1 Samuel 15:35; 2 Samuel 6:23; Matthew 12:20); nor does the word *firstborn* decide the *much-disputed question*, whether Mary had any children to Joseph after the birth of Christ; for, as Lightfoot says, “The law, in speaking of the firstborn, regarded not whether any were born *after* or no, but only that none were born before.”²⁰⁴

John Calvin used this very argument to establish the fact of Mary’s perpetual virginity, which he believed (based primarily on Scripture alone), as did Luther, Zwingli, Bullinger, and many later prominent, theologically conservative, and scholarly Protestants (such as John Wesley). No one had ever denied this doctrine until the late fourth century, when one Helvidius tangled unsuccessfully with St. Jerome. Calvin appealed to St. Jerome in his own commentary on this issue, and the issue of Jesus’ supposed blood

brothers did not come up again until the last few centuries, in which “higher criticism” has often been employed to question traditional interpretations of the Bible.

Scriptural evidence: Mary the intercessor, Mediatrix, and spiritual Mother

John 19:26-27: “He said to his mother, ‘Woman, behold your son!’ Then he said to the disciple, ‘Behold your mother!’ ”

It is quite reasonable to assume that in this utterance of Jesus on the Cross, more is involved than simply asking John to look after his mother. For Jesus addresses Mary first, which is odd if in fact no spiritual meaning is to be found here. John, like Nicodemus (John 3:1-15), is a representative figure in this instance: the disciple of Christ, in relationship to the Mother of the Church. As he would care for her physical needs, so she was to be to him (and to all Christians) a spiritual Mother.^{[205](#)}

Neither Mary nor John are called by their proper names. Rather, they are the archetypes of “Mother Church”^{[206](#)} and the faithful follower of Christ. The double phraseology recalls the covenantal formula of the Old Testament: “I will be his father, and he shall be my son” (2 Sam. 7:14; cf. 2 Cor. 6:16, 18; Heb. 1:5; Rev. 21:7). The motherhood of the Church is seen in passages such as Galatians 4:26: “But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.”

Revelation 12:1, 5, 17: “And a great portent appeared in Heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. . . .

She brought forth a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne. . . .

Then the dragon was angry with the woman, and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus. . . .

Cardinal Newman comments:

What I would maintain is this, that the Holy Apostle would not have spoken of the Church under this particular image, *unless* there had existed a blessed Virgin Mary, who was exalted on high and the object of veneration to all the faithful. No one doubts that the “man-child” spoken of is an allusion to our Lord; why then is not “the Woman” an allusion to His mother?^{[207](#)}

This passage has traditionally had a double interpretation, which is not unusual in Scripture. The primary application is to the Church, or the people of God. But a secondary reference can legitimately be made to the Blessed Virgin Mary, according to the literal meaning of 12:5, in which she bears the Messiah, Jesus (see Ps. 2:9). As such, the passage echoes the Mary/Eve symbolism of John 19:26-27.

Furthermore, the war with the dragon (identified as Satan in 12:9) recalls the Protoevangelion of Genesis 3:15 (“her seed”/“her offspring” battle the Devil) and supports the notion of the spiritual motherhood of Mary. The symbolism of Mary as the Church and the New Eve was already prevalent in the early centuries of the Church. The “woman” here gives birth “in anguish” (12:2), which harkens back to Genesis 3:16, and is perhaps an anticipation of Calvary.

Mary as intercessor

As the pre-eminent saint and “all-holy one,” Mary has a singular role in Heaven as an intercessor for us (James 5:16) and, as such, is venerated due to her unique attributes and privileges. This aspect has been dealt with generally with regard to the Communion of Saints. Mary is unique in this regard because she is the Mother of God and without sin, and is, therefore, the very highest and most exalted of all God’s creatures.

Cardinal Newman exclaims:

I consider it impossible, then, for those who believe the Church to be one vast body in Heaven and on earth, in which every holy creature of God has his place, and of which prayer is the life, when once they recognize the

sanctity and dignity of the Blessed Virgin, not to perceive immediately that her office above is one of perpetual intercession for the faithful militant, and that our very relation to her must be that of clients to a patron, and that . . . the weapon of the Second Eve and Mother of God is prayer.²⁰⁸

Mary as a type of the Church

Mary is the first Christian, and is the Mother of believers in the same way that Abraham is known as the Father of believers. Abraham brought about the Old Covenant (humanly speaking) by an act of faith, and Mary, as the New Eve, assents obediently at the Annunciation, thus undoing the disobedience of Eve, the mother of the human race. As the sterile and aged Sarah was to be a mother to Israel, so the Virgin Mary would become the Mother of God and of Christians.

There is also a fascinating type in the Old Testament of which Mary, again, appears to be the fulfillment: the Daughter of Zion,²⁰⁹ who is the personification of Israel (the Church is the “new Israel”). The following verses are a representative sample of this typology: Lamentations 1:15, 2:13; Isaiah 62:5, 62:11; Jeremiah 4:31; Micah 4:10; Zechariah 2:10, 9:9; Zephaniah 3:14; cf. Revelation 21:2-3. In Lamentations 1:15 and Isaiah 62:5, the “Daughter of Zion” is described as a virgin.

In Zephaniah 3:14 and Zechariah 9:9, the Greek word *chaire* (“hail”) appears in the Septuagint — the same word as that in Luke 1:28 (“Hail, full of grace”). *Chaire* is used in prophecies regarding the messianic deliverance of the Jews. The parallelism is seen to be more profound by a verse-by-verse comparison of Zephaniah 3:14-17 with Luke 1:28-31.

Mary as Mediatrix

Ludwig Ott explains this greatly misunderstood doctrine:

Mary is designated Mediatrix of all graces in a double sense: 1) Mary gave the Redeemer, the Source of all graces, to the world, and in this way she is

the channel of all graces; 2) Since Mary's Assumption into Heaven, no grace is conferred on man without her actual intercessory cooperation. . . .

Mary freely and deliberately cooperated in giving the Redeemer to the world. . . . The Incarnation . . . and the Redemption . . . were dependent on her assent. In this significant moment in the history of Salvation Mary represented humanity. . . .

The title Co-redemptrix, which has been current since the fifteenth century . . . must not be conceived in the sense of an equation of the efficacy of Mary with the redemptive activity of Christ, the sole Redeemer of humanity (1 Tim. 2:5). . . . Her cooperation in the objective redemption is an indirect, remote cooperation, and derives from this, that she voluntarily devoted her whole life to the service of the Redeemer, and under the Cross, suffered and sacrificed with Him. . . .

Christ alone truly offered the sacrifice of atonement on the Cross; Mary merely gave Him moral support in this action. . . .

Since her assumption into Heaven, Mary cooperates in the application of the grace of Redemption to man. She participates in the distribution of grace by her maternal intercession, which is far inferior in efficacy to that of the intercessory prayer of Christ, the High Priest, but surpasses far the intercessory prayer of all the other saints.

According to the view of the older, and of many of the modern theologians Mary's intercessory cooperation extends to all graces, which are conferred on mankind, so that no grace accrues to men without the intercession of Mary. The implication of this is not that we are obliged to beg for all graces through Mary, nor that Mary's intercession is intrinsically necessary for the application of the grace, but that, according to God's positive ordinance, the redemptive grace of Christ is conferred on nobody without the actual intercessory cooperation of Mary.^{[210](#)}

Mary's secondary (to Christ) and wholly derivative function as the Mediatrix^{[211](#)} is no more a violation of his unique mediatorship than any number of functions he sanctions and allows among his Body, the Church. We pray for each other, thus acting as mediators. One could just as easily say,

“Why ask your fellow Christians to pray for you when you can ask Jesus?” as “Why do you ask for Mary’s prayers when you can go directly to Jesus?” Yet God commands us to pray for one another. God is Creator, but he gives us the privilege of procreation, in childbirth and parenthood. Jesus is the “chief” Shepherd of his flock (John 10:11-16; 1 Pet. 5:4), yet he assigns lesser shepherds to watch over his own (John 21:15-17; Eph. 4:11). And he is the supreme Judge, but he bids us to judge as well (Matt. 19:28; 1 Cor. 6:2-3; Rev. 20:4). Many other similar examples can be found in the Bible.

The Mariology of the founders of Protestantism

The founders of Protestantism, or Reformers, as they are known, who believed in “Scripture alone” as the highest Christian authority, nevertheless continued in the sixteenth century to retain a surprising number of Marian dogmas (particularly the perpetual virginity and the use of *Theotokos*). In many respects they were closer in belief to their Catholic opponents than they are to present-day Protestants. Martin Luther himself was startlingly “Catholic” in this regard. The views of these men are of considerable historical interest and deserve to be detailed at some length.

Martin Luther taught the traditional understanding of the title “Mother of God” in the following passage:

God did not derive his divinity from Mary; but it does not follow that it is therefore wrong to say that God was born of Mary, that God is Mary’s Son, and that Mary is God’s mother. . . . She is the true mother of God and bearer of God. . . . Mary suckled God, rocked God to sleep, prepared broth and soup for God, etc. For God and man are one person, one Christ, one Son, one Jesus, not two Christs . . . just as your son is not two sons . . . even though he has two natures, body and soul, the body from you, the soul from God alone.^{[212](#)}

Luther also thought it altogether proper to venerate Mary:

The veneration of Mary is inscribed in the very depths of the human heart.^{[213](#)}

She is nobility, wisdom, and holiness personified. We can never honor her enough. Still honor and praise must be given to her in such a way as to injure neither Christ nor the Scriptures.^{[214](#)}

The perpetual virginity of Mary is expressly upheld by Luther:

Christ, our Savior, was the real and natural fruit of Mary's virginal womb. . . . This was without the cooperation of a man, and she remained a virgin after that.^{[215](#)}

Christ . . . was the only Son of Mary, and the Virgin Mary bore no children besides Him. . . . I am inclined to agree with those who declare that *brothers* really mean "cousins" here, for Holy Writ and the Jews always call cousins brothers.^{[216](#)}

Luther even accepted the Immaculate Conception:

It is a sweet and pious belief that the infusion of Mary's soul was effected *without Original Sin*; so that in the very *infusion of her soul* she was also purified from Original Sin and adorned with God's gifts, receiving a pure soul infused by God; thus from the first moment she began to live, she was free from all sin.^{[217](#)}

She is *full of grace*; so that she may be recognized as without any sin. That is a high and great thing, for God's grace fills her with all gifts and frees her from all evil.^{[218](#)}

The Lutheran scholar Arthur Carl Piepkorn (1907-1973), of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, after intense study, confirmed Luther's lifelong (barring two "lapses") acceptance of the Immaculate Conception.^{[219](#)} Although he made no unequivocal statements concerning it, Luther never denied the Assumption.^{[220](#)} Additionally, he upheld the spiritual motherhood of Mary, the usefulness of the Rosary, and the propriety of the phrase "Queen of Heaven":

Mary is the Mother of Jesus and the Mother of all of us. . . . If he is ours, we ought to be in his situation; there where he is, we ought also to be and all that he has ought to be ours, and his mother is also our mother.^{[221](#)}

Our prayer should include the Mother of God. . . . What the Hail Mary says is that all glory should be given to God, using these words: “Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus Christ. Amen!” You see that these words are not concerned with prayer, but purely with giving praise and honor. . . . We can use the Hail Mary as a meditation in which we recite what grace God has given her.

Second, we should add a wish that everyone may know and respect her. . . . He who has no faith is advised to refrain from saying the Hail Mary. . . [222](#)

Although she was without sin, yet that grace was far too great for her to deserve it in any way. How should a creature deserve to become the Mother of God? . . . It is necessary also to keep within bounds and not to make too much of calling her “Queen of Heaven,” which is a *true-enough name*.... [223](#)

Even John Calvin, who was much less traditional than Luther in many ways, makes several “Catholic-sounding” comments about Mary:

We cannot give praise for the blessing which Christ has given to us without remembering at the same time the glorious privilege which God bestowed on Mary by choosing her to be the mother of his only Son. . . . Now she is called Blessed because, receiving by faith the blessing which is offered to her, she opened the way for God to accomplish his work. [224](#)

Let us learn to praise the holy Virgin. When we confess with her that we are nothing . . . and that we owe all to the pure goodness of God, see how we will be disciples of the Virgin Mary? [225](#)

There has been some ignorance in that they have reproved this fashion of speaking of the Virgin Mary as the mother of God. [226](#)

Helvidius displayed excessive ignorance in concluding that Mary must have had many sons, because Christ’s “brothers” are sometimes mentioned. [227](#)

[On Matthew 1:25:] The inference he [Helvidius] drew from it was that

Mary remained a virgin no longer than till her first birth, and that afterwards she had other children by her husband. . . . No just and well-grounded inference can be drawn from these words . . . as to what took place after the birth of Christ. He is called “firstborn”; but it is for the sole purpose of informing us that he was born of a virgin. . . . What took place afterward the historian does not inform us. . . . No man will obstinately keep up the argument, except from an extreme fondness for disputation.^{[228](#)}

Heinrich Bullinger, another historically significant Protestant Reformer, made an extraordinary proclamation which appears to uphold virtually all of the Catholic Marian dogmas:

Elijah was transported, body and soul, in a chariot of fire; he was not buried in any Church bearing his name, but mounted up to Heaven, so that . . . we might know what immortality and recompense God prepares for his faithful prophets and for his most outstanding and incomparable creatures. . . . It is for this reason, we believe, that the pure and immaculate embodiment of the Mother of God, the Virgin Mary, the Temple of the Holy Spirit, that is to say, her saintly body, was carried up to Heaven by the angels.^{[229](#)}

Within Anglicanism, many of the “high-church” or “Anglo-Catholic” faction believe in a Mariology not unlike that of the Catholic Church, both doctrinally and devotionally.

Chapter Ten

The Papacy and Infallibility

“Keys of the kingdom”

The ecumenical First Vatican Council, in 1870, defined once and for all the dogma of papal infallibility as follows:

We teach and define that it is a dogma divinely revealed: that the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when, in discharge of the office of pastor and teacher of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme Apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine regarding faith or morals to be held by the universal Church, is, by the divine assistance promised to him in Blessed Peter, possessed of that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer willed that His Church should be endowed in defining doctrine regarding faith or morals; and that, therefore, such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are of themselves, and not from the consent of the Church, irreformable.^{[230](#)}

The charge is often made that the Catholic Church “invents” dogmas late in the game, which were not present in earlier centuries. The papacy, and papal infallibility, have indeed been in existence from the very earliest days of the Church, starting with the apostle Peter, and what he and other Christians believed about his leadership and jurisdiction.^{[231](#)} As is to be expected, however, both the office of the Pope and the notion of papal infallibility did undergo much development through the centuries.

To illustrate how the definition of 1870 drew on centuries of reflection and practice, we will cite St. Francis de Sales’s teaching from around 1596:

When he teaches the whole Church as shepherd, in general matters of faith and morals, then there is nothing but doctrine and truth. And in fact everything a king says is not a law or an edict, but that only which a king says as king and as a legislator. So everything the Pope says is not canon law or of legal obligation; he must mean to define and to lay down the law

for the sheep, and he must keep the due order and form.

We must not think that in everything and everywhere his judgment is infallible, but then only when he gives judgment on a matter of Faith in questions necessary to the whole Church; for in particular cases which depend on human fact he can err, there is no doubt, although it is not for us to control him in these cases, save with all reverence, submission, and discretion. Theologians have said, in a word, that he can err in questions of fact, not in questions of right; that he can err *extra cathedram*, outside the chair of Peter; that is, as a private individual, by writings and bad example.

But he cannot err when he is *in cathedra*, that is, when he intends to make an instruction and decree for the guidance of the whole Church, when he means to confirm his brethren as supreme pastor, and to conduct them into the pastures of the Faith. For then it is not so much man who determines, resolves, and defines as it is the Blessed Holy Spirit by man, which Spirit, according to the promise made by our Lord to the Apostles, teaches all truth to the Church.^{[232](#)}

Robert Hugh Benson (1871-1914), a convert to Catholicism whose father, Edward W. Benson (1829-1896), had been the Archbishop of Canterbury, the highest office in Anglicanism, wrote concerning the development of the papacy:

It was not, then, until the head had been fully established as supreme over the body that men had eyes to see how it had been so ordained and indicated from the beginning. After it had come to pass, it was seen to have been inevitable. All this is paralleled, of course, by the ordinary course of affairs. Laws of nature, as well as laws of grace, act quite apart from man's perception or appreciation of them; and it is not until the law is recognized that its significance and inevitability, its illustrations and effects, are intelligibly recognized either.^{[233](#)}

Likewise, Cardinal Newman, in his masterpiece *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, offers similar analysis:

Whether communion with the Pope was necessary for Catholicity would not and could not be debated till a suspension of that communion had

actually occurred. It is not a greater difficulty that St. Ignatius does not write to the Asian Greeks about Popes, than that St. Paul does not write to the Corinthians about Bishops. And it is less a difficulty that the Papal supremacy was not formally acknowledged in the second century, than that there was no formal acknowledgment on the part of the Church of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity till the fourth. No doctrine is defined till it is violated. . . .

Moreover, an international bond and a common authority could not be consolidated . . . while persecutions lasted. If the Imperial Power checked the development of Councils, it availed also for keeping back the power of the Papacy. The Creed, the Canon, in like manner, both remained undefined. . . . All began to form, as soon as the Empire relaxed its tyrannous oppression of the Church. . . .

Supposing there be otherwise good reason for saying that the Papal Supremacy is part of Christianity, there is nothing in the early history of the Church to contradict it. . . .

Doctrine cannot but develop as time proceeds and need arises, and . . . therefore it is lawful, or rather necessary, to interpret the words and deeds of the earlier Church by the determinate teaching of the later.^{[234](#)}

Cardinal Gibbons eloquently defended papal infallibility against the common objections of Protestants and other non-Catholics:

You will tell me that infallibility is too great a prerogative to be conferred on man. I answer: Has not God, in former times, clothed His Apostles with powers far more exalted? They were endowed with the gifts of working miracles, of prophecy and inspiration; they were the mouthpiece communicating God's revelation, of which the Popes are merely the custodians. If God could make man the organ of His revealed Word, is it impossible for Him to make man its infallible guardian and interpreter? For, surely, greater is the Apostle who gives us the inspired Word than the Pope who preserves it from error. . . .

Let us see, sir, whether an infallible Bible is sufficient for you. Either you are infallibly certain that your interpretation of the Bible is correct or you

are not.

If you are infallibly certain, then you assert for yourself, and of course for every reader of the Scripture, a personal infallibility which you deny to the Pope, and which we claim only for him. You make every man his own Pope.

If you are not infallibly certain that you understand the true meaning of the whole Bible . . . then, I ask, of what use to you is the objective infallibility of the Bible without an infallible interpreter?²³⁵

Although the Pope is supreme Head of the Church and preeminent in authority, nevertheless, he acts in concert with both the college of bishops (especially when meeting in an ecumenical council, such as Trent or Vatican II),²³⁶ and the “sense of the faithful” (or *sensus fidelium*).²³⁷ It is this united jurisdiction of bishops and Pope (distantly analogous to the U.S. Congress and President, with the Supreme Court similar to Catholic Canon Law) which is the distinctive mark of Catholic ecclesiology,²³⁸ as opposed to Eastern Orthodoxy, which accepts bishops but acknowledges no Pope, and Protestantism, which does not formally recognize the papacy, and many denominations of which (perhaps the majority) lack bishops. Catholics claim that this arrangement is mirrored in the biblical relationship of St. Peter and the other original disciples, and that it is required by the demands of apostolic succession (see Appendix Two), which is itself suggested in the Bible.²³⁹

Bishop Vincent Gasser, in his famous defense of papal infallibility (the *Relatio*) at the First Vatican Council, discussed the aspects of collegiality and community:

We do defend the infallibility of the person of the Roman Pontiff, not as an individual person, but as the person of the Roman Pontiff or a public person, that is, as head of the Church in his relation to the Church Universal. . . .

We do not exclude the cooperation of the Church because the infallibility of the Roman Pontiff does not come to him in the manner of inspiration or of revelation, but through a divine assistance. Therefore, the Pope, by reason of his office and the gravity of the matter, is held to use the means

suitable for properly discerning and aptly enunciating the truth. These means are councils, or the advice of the bishops, cardinals, theologians, etc. Indeed the means are diverse according to the diversity of situations, and we should piously believe that, in the divine assistance promised to Peter and his successors by Christ, there is simultaneously contained a promise about the means which are necessary and suitable to make an infallible pontifical judgment.

Finally we do not separate the Pope, even minimally, from the consent of the Church, as long as that consent is not laid down as a condition which is either antecedent or consequent. We are not able to separate the Pope from the consent of the Church because this consent is never able to be lacking to him. Indeed, since we believe that the Pope is infallible through the divine assistance, by that very fact we also believe that the assent of the Church will not be lacking to his definitions, since it is not able to happen that the body of bishops be separated from its head, and since the Church universal is not able to fail.^{[240](#)}

Nevertheless, the Pope is ultimately supreme, even over ecumenical councils, which he ratifies in all particulars (a power that might be compared in part to the veto of the American President). The famous English convert and apologist Ronald Knox (1888-1957) explains:

[It is a] quite unworkable idea that the authority of the Pope depends on the authority of the Council. There is no way of deciding which councils were ecumenical councils except by saying that those councils were ecumenical which had their decisions ratified by the Pope. Now, either that ratification is infallible of itself, or else you will immediately have to summon a fresh ecumenical council to find out whether the Pope's ratification was infallible or not, and so on *ad infinitum*. You can't keep on going round and round in a vicious circle; in the long run, the last word of decision must lie with one man, and that man is obviously the Pope. In the last resort the Pope must be the umpire, must have the casting vote. If, therefore, there is to be any infallibility in the Church, that infallibility must reside in the Pope, even when he speaks in his own name, without summoning a council to fortify his decision.^{[241](#)}

Contrary to common assumptions, the doctrine of the papacy is well

grounded in Scripture, and the institution is present in increasingly developing stages throughout the history of the Church. Moreover, the constant, remarkable primacy of Rome in the history of Christianity is equally undeniable. Because the very existence of this historical institution (in the early Church) is so often denied (for example, many arbitrarily maintain that Pope Leo the Great in the fifth century was the first Pope, and others claim the same for Gregory the Great in the sixth), more attention than usual will be paid to the actual history of the papacy and the theological justifications historically put forth in defense of it.

Scriptural evidence for the papacy and the apostolic primacy of St. Peter

St. Peter as the Rock (Matthew 16:18)

Matthew 16:18: “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it.”

Catholics contend that the “rock” is Peter himself, not his faith, or Jesus (although arguably his faith is assumed by Christ in naming Peter “rock” in the first place). This interpretation is found in the Church Fathers at least as early as Tertullian (d. c. 230). The next verse (16:19) is in the singular, which supports this view, which is in fact the consensus of the majority of biblical commentators today, according to the article on Peter in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1985 edition).^{[242](#)}

It has often been argued to the contrary that Jesus called Peter *petros* (literally, “stone”), not *petra* (the word for “rock” in the passage), so that the “rock” wasn’t Peter; but this is simply explained by the necessity for a proper male name in Greek to be in the masculine gender. But in Aramaic, the language Jesus spoke, the name *kepha* would have been used for both “rock” and “Peter.” Matthew could just as easily have used another Greek word for “stone” — *lithos* — in contrast to “rock,” but this would have distorted the unmistakable word-play of the passage, which is the whole point!

Many prominent Protestant scholars and exegetes have agreed that Peter is

the “rock” in Matthew 16:18; these include Alford, Broadus, Keil, Kittel, Cullmann,²⁴³ Albright,²⁴⁴ Robert McAfee Brown,²⁴⁵ and more recently, respected Evangelical commentators R. T. France²⁴⁶ and D. A. Carson.²⁴⁷ Also, popular one-volume Protestant Bible commentaries such as *Peake’s Commentary*,²⁴⁸ *New Bible Commentary* (NBC), and numerous others concur.²⁴⁹ Both Carson and France surprisingly assert that only Protestant overreaction to Catholic Petrine and papal claims have brought about the denial that Peter himself is the “rock.”

The great Protestant Greek scholar Marvin Vincent was one who took the traditional view, in his standard reference work *Word Studies in the New Testament*, originally published in 1887:

The word refers neither to *Christ* as a *rock*, distinguished from *Simon*, a *stone*, nor to *Peter’s confession*, but to *Peter himself*. ... The reference of *petra* to Christ is forced and unnatural. The obvious reference of the word is to Peter. The emphatic *this* naturally refers to the nearest antecedent; and besides, the metaphor is thus weakened, since Christ appears here, not as the *foundation*, but as the *architect*: “*On this rock* will I build.” Again, Christ is the great foundation, the *chief cornerstone*, but the New Testament writers recognize no impropriety in applying to the members of Christ’s church certain terms which are applied to him. For instance, Peter himself (1 Pet. 2:4) calls Christ a *living stone* and . . . addresses the church as *living stones* (1Pet.2:5). . . .

Equally untenable is the explanation which refers *petra* to Simon’s confession. Both the play upon the words and the natural reading of the passage are against it, and besides, it does not conform to the fact, since the church is built, not on *confessions*, but on *confessors* — living men. . . .

The reference to Simon himself is confirmed by the actual relation of Peter to the early church.... See Acts 1:15; 2:14, 37; 3:2; 4:8; 5:15, 29; 9:34, 40; 10:25-6; Galatians 1:18.²⁵⁰

St. Francis de Sales, a leader of the Catholic Reformation, draws out the implications of this passage for the papacy:

Our Lord, then, who is comparing his Church to a building, when he says

that he will build it on St. Peter, shows that St. Peter will be its foundation-stone. . . . When he makes St. Peter its foundation, he makes him head and superior of this family. By these words, our Lord shows the perpetuity and immovableness of this foundation. The stone on which one raises the building is the first; the others rest on it. Other stones may be removed without overthrowing the edifice, but he who takes away the foundation knocks down the house. If, then, the gates of Hell can in no wise prevail against the Church, they can in no wise prevail against its foundation and head, which they cannot take away and overturn without entirely overturning the whole edifice....

The supreme charge which St. Peter had . . . as chief and governor, is not *beside* the authority of his Master, but is only a participation in this, so that he is not the foundation of this hierarchy *besides* our Lord, but rather in our Lord: as we call him most holy Father in our Lord, outside whom he would be nothing. . . .

St. Peter is foundation, not founder, of the whole Church; foundation but founded on another foundation, which is our Lord . . . in fine, administrator and not lord, and in no way the foundation of our faith, hope, and charity, nor of the efficacy of the Sacraments. . . . So, although [Christ] is the Good Shepherd, he gives us shepherds (Eph. 4:11) under himself, between whom and his Majesty there is so great a difference that he declares himself to be the only shepherd (John 10:11; Ezek. 34:23).²⁵¹

Chesterton made a marvelously insightful comment concerning Christ's selection of Peter as the "rock":

When Christ at a symbolic moment was establishing His great society, he chose for its cornerstone neither the brilliant Paul nor the mystic John, but a shuffler, a snob, a coward — in a word, a man. And upon this rock he has built His Church, and the gates of Hell have not prevailed against it. All the empires and the kingdoms have failed, because of this inherent and continual weakness, that they were founded by strong men and upon strong men. But this one thing, the historic Christian Church, was founded on a weak man, and for that reason it is indestructible. For no chain is stronger than its weakest link.²⁵²

The keys of the kingdom (Matthew 16:19)

Matthew 16:19: “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven.”

Isaiah 22:20-22: “In that day I will call my servant Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah . . . and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David; he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.”

Revelation 3:7 [Christ describing Himself]: “. . . the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one shall shut, who shuts and no one opens.”

The power of the “keys,” in the Hebrew mind, had to do with administrative authority and ecclesiastical discipline and, in a broad sense, might be thought to encompass the use of excommunication, penitential decrees, a barring from the sacraments and lesser censures, and legislative and executive functions. Like the name “rock,” this privilege was bestowed only upon St. Peter and no other disciple or apostle. He was to become God’s “vice-regent,” so to speak.^{[253](#)}

In the Old Testament, a steward was a man *over a house* (Gen. 43:19, 44:4; 1 Kings 4:6, 16:9, 18:3; 2 Kings 10:5, 15:5, 18:18; Isa. 22:15). The steward was also called a “governor” in the Old Testament and has been described by commentators as a type of prime minister.

In the New Testament, the two words often translated as “steward” are *oikonomos* (Luke 16:2-3; 1 Cor. 4:1-2; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet. 4:10) and *epitropos* (Matt. 20:8; Gal. 4:2).

Several Protestant commentaries and dictionaries take the position that Christ is clearly hearkening back to Isaiah 22:15-22 when he makes this pronouncement, and that it has something to do with delegated authority in the Church that he is establishing (in the same context).^{[254](#)} He applies the same language to himself in Revelation 3:7 (cf. Job 12:14), so that his commission to Peter may be interpreted as an assignment of powers to the

recipient in his stead, as a sort of authoritative representative or ambassador.

The “opening” and “shutting” (Isa. 22:2) appear to refer to a jurisdictional power that no one but the king (in the ancient kingdom of Judah) could override. Literally, it refers to the prime minister’s prerogative to deny or allow entry to the palace and access to the king. In Isaiah’s time, this office was over three hundred years old and is thought to have been derived by Solomon from the Egyptian model of palace functionary, or the Pharaoh’s “vizier,” who was second in command after the Pharaoh. This was exactly the office granted to Joseph in Egypt (Gen. 41:40-44, 45:8).^{[255](#)}

The symbol of keys always represented authority in the Middle East. This standpoint comes down to us in our own culture when we observe mayors giving an honored visitor the “key to the city.”

The Commentary on the Whole Bible expounds Isaiah 22:15, 22 as follows:

[The steward is] the *king’s friend*, or *principal officer of the court* (1 Kings 4:5; 18:3; 1 Chron. 27:33), the *king’s counselor*). ...

Keys are carried sometimes in the East hanging from the kerchief on the shoulder. But the phrase is rather figurative for *sustaining the government on one’s shoulders*. Eliakim, as his name implies, is here plainly a type of the God-man Christ, the son of “David,” of whom Isaiah (9:6) uses the same language as the former clause of this verse [*and the government will be upon his shoulder*].^{[256](#)}

One can confidently conclude, therefore, that when Old Testament usage and the culture of the hearers is closely examined, the phrase “keys of the kingdom of Heaven” must have great significance (for Peter and for the papacy) indeed, all the more so since Christ granted this honor only to St. Peter.

The power to bind and loose

Matthew 16:19: “Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven,

and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven.”

Binding and *loosing* were technical rabbinical terms meaning, respectively, “to forbid” and “to permit,” with regard to interpretations of Jewish Law. In secondary usage, they could mean “to condemn” and “to acquit.” This power is also given to the Apostles in Matthew 18:17-18, where it apparently refers particularly to discipline and excommunication in local jurisdictions (whereas Peter’s commission seems to apply to the universal Church).

In John 20:23, it is also granted to the Apostles (in a different terminology, which suggests the power to impose penance and grant indulgences and absolution). Generally speaking, *binding* and *loosing* usually meant the prerogative to formulate Christian doctrine and to require allegiance to it, as well as to condemn heresies that were opposed to the true doctrine (Jude 3).^{[257](#)}

Marvin Vincent writes:

No other terms were in more constant use in Rabbinic canon-law than those of *binding* and *loosing*. They represented the *legislative* and *judicial* powers of the Rabbinic office. These powers Christ now transferred . . . in their reality, to his Apostles; the first, here, to Peter, as their representative, the second, after his Resurrection, to the Church (John 20:23). . . .^{[258](#)}

St. Peter commanded to “feed my sheep”

John 21:15-17: “Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?’ He said to him, ‘Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.’ He said to him, ‘Feed my lambs.’ A second time he said to him, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love me?’ He said to him, ‘Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.’ He said to him, ‘Tend my sheep.’ He said to him the third time, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love me?’ Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, ‘Do you love me?’ And he said to him, ‘Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed my sheep.’ ”

Revelation 7:17: “For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water.”

The Greek word for “tend” in 21:16 is *poimaino*, which is applied to Jesus Christ in Revelation 7:17 above, and also in Matthew 2:6 and Revelation 2:27, 12:5, and 19:15. It is used of bishops in Acts 20:28 and 1 Peter 5:2 (which seems to be a passage perhaps reminiscent in St. Peter’s mind of the Lord’s charge to him). Clearly, an awesome amount of spiritual authority is being given to Peter, which includes, according to the Protestant Greek scholar W. E. Vine, “discipline, authority, restoration, material assistance of individuals.”^{[259](#)}

The commission of Christ to Peter, then, to “tend my sheep,” while not exclusive to Peter in the sense that no one else (besides Christ) exercises this function (St. Peter himself says as much in 1 Peter 5:2), nevertheless is supremely unique and important insofar as no other *individual* disciple is likewise instructed by our Lord — and in such momentous terms (considering all of the biblical data).

Peter’s ministry to the Church is always universal; his jurisdiction knows no bounds, and the language that Christ himself applies to him is strikingly sublime and profound. For to no one else was it granted the keys of the kingdom of Heaven. No one else was renamed “Rock,” and proclaimed by Jesus to be the foundation upon which he would build his Church.

And although the power to bind and loose was given to the disciples as a whole in Matthew 18:18, nevertheless, Peter is the only *individual* to be given this power by Christ. In other words, St. Peter has extraordinary privileges unique to himself, and in cases where they are not exclusive, they are obviously applied to him in a pre-eminent sense.

We find then, that the scriptural relation between Christ, Peter, and the disciples (by extension, bishops and priests), is precisely that found in the teaching and practice of the Catholic Church, where the Pope, more than just the “foremost among equals,” as the Orthodox and some Lutherans and Anglicans hold, is the supreme shepherd and leader of the Church, yet not in such a fashion as to exclude Christ as the Head or the cardinals and bishops (and even laymen) as fellow members of the Body in Christ acting in organic

harmony.

Always, it is the Pope and the cardinals, the Pope and the council, the Pope acting with due consideration of the faithful lay members of the Church, but the Pope is supreme. It is simply not necessary to dichotomize the relationship between the Pope and lesser clergy. With regard to the papacy, only Catholicism does justice to both the scriptural data and the course of the early Church in the formative years of her development.

One need not fall into the trap of denying the Pope's existence (and thereby doing violence to the Petrine texts as well), nor of caricaturing the Catholic Church's doctrine of the papacy as strictly a "top-down," "autocratic," "monarchical" conception of Church government. In any event, the abundant Petrine evidence in the Bible must be dealt with in an open and consistent manner, whatever position one holds.

St. Peter charged to strengthen his brethren

Luke 22:31-32: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren."

The Jesuit apologist Nicholas Russo and St. Francis de Sales explain how this charge to St. Peter suggests the need for an ongoing, infallible papacy:

In this passage there is question of infallibility. For infallibility is nothing else but a supernatural gift by which the recipient is shielded from all error against faith. But — a) this is clearly expressed in the words, "that thy faith fail not"; b) it is implied in the command to confirm his brethren; c) it is supposed in the very failure of Satan's attempts to destroy the Church, which is personified in the Apostles, and which depends essentially upon faith. . . .

The temptation is common, but the prayer was offered for Peter alone; not because our Lord was less solicitous for the rest of the Apostles, says Bossuet, but because by strengthening the head, He wished to prevent the

rest from staggering. Now, this duty of confirming his brethren was to last as long as the Church; and Peter, accordingly, abides always in his successors. . . . Strange, indeed, would it be to suppose that the doctrinal infallibility of the Head of the Church should cease just when the need becomes greater and more urgent. Christ would, in this supposition, have rendered His first vicar infallible . . . and denied this divine assistance to all the rest of His vicars on earth, when in their times the dangers were to be greater. . . . If this consequence be absurd, our position is unassailable.^{[260](#)}

He prays for St. Peter as for the confirmer and support of the others; and what is this but to declare him head of the others? Truly one could not give St. Peter the command to confirm the Apostles without charging him to have care of them. . . . Is this not to again call him foundation of the Church? If he supports, secures, strengthens the very foundation-stones, how shall he not confirm all the rest? If he has the charge of supporting the columns of the Church, how shall he not support all the rest of the building? If he has the charge of feeding the pastors, must he not be sovereign pastor himself? . . . Our Lord . . . having planted this holy assembly of the disciples, prayed for the head and the root, in order that the water of faith might not fail to him who was therewith to supply all the rest, and in order that, through the head, the Faith might always be preserved in the Church.^{[261](#)}

St. Paul's rebuke of St. Peter

Galatians 2:9, 11-14: “And when they perceived the grace that was given to me, James and Cephas [Peter] and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship. . . . But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he ate with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. And with him the rest of the Jews acted insincerely, so that even Barnabas was carried away by their insincerity. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, ‘If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?’ ”

Bertrand Conway puts this incident in the proper perspective for us:

St. Paul's rebuke of St. Peter, instead of implying a *denial* of his supremacy, implies just the *opposite*. He tells us that the example of St. Peter *compelled* the Gentiles to live as the Jews. St. Paul's example had not the same compelling power.

The duty of fraternal correction (Matt. 18:15) may often require an inferior to rebuke a superior in defense of justice and truth. St. Bernard, St. Thomas of Canterbury, and St. Catherine of Siena have rebuked Popes, while fully acknowledging their supreme authority. . . .

The rebuke, however, did not refer to the *doctrine*, but to the *conduct* of St. Peter. . . . St. Peter had not changed the views he had himself set forth at the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:10). But at Antioch he withdrew from the table of the Gentiles, because he feared giving offense to the Jewish converts. They at once mistook his kindness for an approval of the false teaching of certain Judaizers, who wished to make the Mosaic Law obligatory upon all Christians. His action was most *imprudent*, and calculated to do harm because of his great influence and authority. St. Paul, therefore, had a perfect right to uphold the Gospel liberty by a direct appeal to St. Peter's own example and teaching.²⁶²

Leslie Rumble and Charles Carty, who co-wrote the three-volume *Radio Replies*, a popular and bestselling defense of Catholicism, agree:

No doctrinal error was involved in this particular case. . . . To cease from doing a lawful thing for fear lest others be scandalized is not a matter of doctrine. It is a question of prudence or imprudence. St. Paul did not act as if he were St. Peter's superior. Nor did he boast. To show the urgency of the matter, he practically said, "I had to resist even Peter — to whom chief authority belongs." And his words derive their full significance only from the fact that St. Peter was head of the Apostles.²⁶³

If St. Peter were guilty in this instance of hypocrisy (which appears to be the case), this is no disproof whatsoever of the Catholic dogma of papal infallibility, since that teaching does not extend to behavior and applies only to decrees on Faith and morals, which are intended to bind all the faithful to a

certain doctrinal standpoint. Granted, hypocrisy and bad example are not conducive to the successful propagation of a viewpoint, yet one must critique an idea according to its actual content. Thus, the attempt to undermine papal infallibility by means of this scriptural passage fails, due to misunderstanding of the Catholic claims for the Pope's divinely appointed charism (in other words, it is a "straw man" argument). The *New Bible Dictionary*, an authoritative Evangelical reference work, states that the disagreement here had nothing to do with any theological dispute between Paul and Peter, but rather, with the unfortunate inconsistency of belief and behavior on Peter's part, and denies the "old theory" that there was some sort of "rivalry" between these two pillars of the early Church.^{[264](#)}

St. Peter at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15)

The apostolic supremacy of St. Peter is also often disputed by the counter-assertion that he did not preside over the Council of Jerusalem, the first record we have of a corporate Christian assembly, convened to settle doctrinal and practical matters. Conway and Rumble and Carty show how this, too, is an untenable position:

St. Peter, not St. James, presided at the Council of Jerusalem. The question at issue was whether the Gentiles were bound to obey the Mosaic Law. Paul, Barnabas, James, and the rest were present as teachers and judges . . . but Peter was their head, and the supreme arbiter of the controversy. . . .

St. Peter spoke first and decided the matter unhesitatingly [Acts 15:7-11], declaring that the Gentile converts were not bound by the Mosaic Law. He claimed to exercise authority in the name of his special election by God to receive the Gentiles (Acts 15:7), and he severely rebuked those who held the opposite view (Acts 15:10). After he had spoken, "all the multitude held their peace" (Acts 15:12) [immediately before Peter spoke, there had been much debate — 15:7]. Those who spoke after him merely confirmed his decision. . . . James gave no special decision on the question. . . . Moreover the decree is attributed to the Council of Apostles and Presbyters . . . (Acts 16:4), and not to James personally.^{[265](#)}

St. James, as local Bishop of Jerusalem, would naturally have a prominent position at the meeting, since it took place in Jerusalem. But there can be no doubt about his deference to the ecumenical position of St. Peter as chief of the Apostles [for example, he starts by saying, “Symeon [Peter] has related . . .”].^{[266](#)}

Petrine panoply: fifty New Testament proofs for the pre-eminence of St. Peter

The papacy is biblically based and is derived from the evident primacy of St. Peter among the Apostles. Like all Christian doctrines, it has undergone development through the centuries, but it hasn't departed from the essential components already existing in the leadership and prerogatives of St. Peter.

These were given to him by our Lord Jesus Christ, acknowledged by his contemporaries, and accepted by the early Church. The biblical Petrine data is quite strong and is inescapably compelling by virtue of its cumulative weight. This is especially made clear with the assistance of biblical commentaries. The evidence of Holy Scripture follows:

1. Peter alone is the Rock upon which Jesus builds his Church (Matt. 16:18). Christ appears here, not as the foundation, but as the architect who “builds.” Moreover, *Rock* embodies a metaphor applied to him by Christ in a sense analogous to the suffering and despised Messiah (1 Pet. 2:4-8; cf. Matt. 21:42). Without a solid foundation, a house falls. The Good Shepherd (John 10:11) gives us other shepherds (pastors) as well (Eph. 4:11).
2. Peter alone is given the keys of the kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 16:19).
3. Peter is individually given the power to bind and loose (Matt. 16:19).
4. Peter's name occurs first in all lists of Apostles (Matt. 10:2; Mark 3:16; Luke 6:14; Acts 1:13). Matthew even calls him the “first” (10:2). (Judas Iscariot is invariably mentioned last.)
5. Peter is almost always named first whenever he appears with anyone else. In one (only?) example to the contrary, Galatians 2:9, where he (Cephas) is listed after James and before John, he is clearly pre-eminent in the entire context (e.g., 1:18-19, 2:7-8).

6. Peter alone among the Apostles receives a new name, Rock, solemnly conferred (John 1:42; Matt. 16:18).
7. Likewise, Peter is regarded by Jesus as the Chief Shepherd after himself (John 21:15-17), singularly by name, and over the universal Church, even though others have a similar but subordinate role (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2).
8. Peter alone among the Apostles is mentioned by name as having been prayed for by Jesus Christ in order that his faith may not fail (Luke 22:32).
9. Peter alone among the Apostles is exhorted by Jesus to “strengthen your brethren” (Luke 22:32).
10. Peter is the first to confess Christ’s Messiahship and divinity (Matt. 16:16).
11. Peter alone is told that he has received divine knowledge by a special revelation (Matt. 16:17).
12. Peter is regarded by the Jews (Acts 4:1-13) as the leader and spokesman of Christianity.
13. Peter is regarded by the common people in the same way (Acts 2:37-41; 5:15).
14. Jesus Christ uniquely associates himself and Peter in the miracle of the tribute-money (Matt. 17:24-27).
15. Christ teaches from Peter’s boat, and the miraculous catch of fish follows (Luke 5:1-11): perhaps a metaphor for the Pope as a “fisher of men” (cf. Matt. 4:19).
16. Peter was the first apostle to set out for and enter the empty tomb (Luke 24:12; John 20:6).
17. Peter is specified by an angel as the leader and representative of the Apostles (Mark 16:7).
18. Peter leads the Apostles in fishing (John 21:2-3, 11). The “bark” (boat) of Peter has been regarded by Catholics as a figure of the Church, with Peter at the helm.
19. Peter alone casts himself into the sea to come to Jesus (John 21:7).
20. Peter’s words are the first recorded and most important in the upper room before Pentecost (Acts 1:15-22).
21. Peter takes the lead in calling for a replacement for Judas (Acts 1:22).
22. Peter is the first person to speak (and the only one recorded) after Pentecost, so he was the first Christian to “preach the gospel” in the

Church era (Acts 2:14-36).

23. Peter works the first miracle of the Church Age, healing a lame man (Acts 3:6-12).
24. Peter utters the first anathema (on Ananias and Sapphira), which is emphatically affirmed by God (Acts 5:2-11).
25. Peter's shadow works miracles (Acts 5:15).
26. Peter is the first after Christ to raise the dead (Acts 9:40).
27. Cornelius is told by an angel to seek out Peter for instruction in Christianity (Acts 10:1-6).
28. Peter is the first to receive the Gentiles, after a revelation from God (Acts 10:9-48).
29. Peter instructs the other Apostles on the catholicity (universality) of the Church (Acts 11:5-17).
30. Peter is the object of the first divine interposition on behalf of an individual in the Church Age (an angel delivers him from prison: Acts 12:1-17).
31. The whole Church (strongly implied) offers earnest prayer for Peter when he is imprisoned (Acts 12:5).
32. Peter opens and presides over the first council of Christianity and lays down principles afterward accepted by it (Acts 15:7-11).
33. Paul distinguishes the Lord's post-Resurrection appearances to Peter from those to other apostles (1 Cor. 15:4-8). The two disciples on the road to Emmaus make the same distinction (Luke 24:34), in this instance mentioning only Peter (Simon), even though they themselves had just seen the risen Jesus within the previous hour (Luke 24:33).
34. Peter is often spoken of as distinct among Apostles (Mark 1:36; Luke 9:28, 32; Acts 2:37, 5:29; 1 Cor. 9:5).
35. Peter is often spokesman for the other Apostles, especially at climactic moments (Mark 8:29; Matt. 18:21; Luke 9:5, 12:41; John 6:67 ff.).
36. Peter's name is always the first listed of the "inner circle" of the disciples (Peter, James, and John — Matt. 17:1, 26:37, 40; Mark 5:37, 14:37).
37. Peter is often the central figure relating to Jesus in dramatic Gospel scenes, such as walking on the water (Matt. 14:28-32; Luke 5:1 ff.; Mark 10:28; Matt. 17:24 ff.).
38. Peter is the first to recognize and refute heresy, in Simon Magus (Acts 8:14-24).

39. Peter's name is mentioned more often than all the other disciples put together: 191 times (162 as Peter or Simon Peter, twenty-three as Simon, and six as Cephas). John is next in frequency, with only forty-eight appearances, and Peter is present fifty percent of the time we find John in the Bible.²⁶⁷ Fulton Sheen reckoned that all the other disciples combined were mentioned 130 times.²⁶⁸ If this is correct, Peter is named a remarkable sixty percent of the time any disciple is referred to.
40. Peter's proclamation at Pentecost (Acts 2:14-41) contains a fully authoritative interpretation of Scripture, a doctrinal decision, and a disciplinary decree concerning members of the House of Israel (2:36) — an example of binding and loosing.
41. Peter was the first "charismatic," having judged authoritatively the first instance of the gift of tongues as genuine (Acts 2:14-21).
42. Peter is the first to preach Christian repentance and Baptism (Acts 2:38).
43. Peter (presumably) leads the first recorded mass Baptism (Acts 2:41).
44. Peter commanded the first Gentile Christians to be baptized (Acts 10:44-48).
45. Peter was the first traveling missionary and first exercised what would now be called "visitation of the churches" (Acts 9:32-38, 43). Paul preached at Damascus immediately after his conversion (Acts 9:20), but hadn't traveled there for that purpose. (God changed his plans!) His missionary journeys begin in Acts 13:2.
46. Paul went to Jerusalem specifically to see Peter for fifteen days in the beginning of his ministry (Gal. 1:18) and was commissioned by Peter, James, and John (Gal. 2:9) to preach to the Gentiles.
47. Peter acts, by strong implication, as the chief bishop/shepherd of the Church (1 Pet. 5:1), since he exhorts all the other bishops, or elders.
48. Peter interprets prophecy (2 Pet. 1:16-21).
49. Peter corrects those who misuse Paul's writings (2 Pet. 3:15-16).
50. Peter wrote his first epistle from Rome, according to most scholars, as its bishop, and as the universal bishop (or Pope) of the early Church. "Babylon" (1 Pet. 5:13) is regarded by many commentators as a code name for Rome.

In conclusion, it strains credulity to hold that God would present St. Peter with such prominence in the Bible, without some meaning and import for later Church government. The papacy is the most plausible interpretation and

actual institutional fulfillment of this biblical evidence. For why would God foreordain such a leadership function, only to cease after Peter's death? Clearly, the *office* of the papacy is paramount, not individual popes, and this was to be perpetual (apostolic succession), just as are the offices of bishop, deacon, teacher, and evangelist.

Appendixes

Appendix One

The “Perspicuity” of Scripture

Most conservative, classical, Evangelical, “Reformation” Protestants hold to the view that — when all is said and done — the Bible is basically *perspicuous* (able to be clearly understood) in and of itself, without the absolute necessity for theological teaching, scholarly interpretation, and the authority of the Church (however defined).

This is not to say that Protestants are consciously taught to ignore Christian historical precedent altogether and shun theological instruction (although, sadly, the tendency of ahistoricism and anti-intellectualism is strong in many circles). Rather, perspicuity is said to apply to doctrines “essential” for salvation. Accordingly, it follows that whatever is necessary for salvation can be found in the Bible by any literate individual without the requisite assistance of an ecclesiastical body. This is presupposed in, for example, the widespread practice of passing out Bibles to the newly evangelized, oftentimes with no provision made for further guidance and supervision.

Many Protestant evangelists, it should be happily acknowledged (notably, Billy Graham), do urge church involvement and membership, but not to the extent that this would undermine the premise of perspicuity itself. Given the denial of some sort of binding, compulsory Christian Tradition, this state of affairs is pretty much inevitable, as a result of the Protestant axiom of the primacy of the individual and his conscience.

But what could possibly be imagined as more fatal to this abstract view than the tragic multiplicity of Protestant denominations? The Bible is indeed more often than not quite clear when approached open-mindedly and with a moral willingness to accept its teachings. But in actual fact many Christians (and also heretics or “cultists”) distort and misunderstand the Bible, or at the very least, arrive at contradictory, sincerely held convictions. This is the whole point from the Catholic perspective. Error is necessarily present wherever contradictions exist — clearly not a desirable situation, as all falsehood is harmful (e.g., John 8:44, 16:13; 2 Thess. 2:10-12; 1 John 4:6). Perspicuity might theoretically be a good thing in principle, and on paper, but in practice it is unworkable and untenable. History has proven this beyond all doubt.

Yet Protestant freedom of conscience is valued more than unity and the certainty of doctrinal truth in all matters (not just the core issues alone). The inquirer with newfound zeal for Christ is in trouble if he expects easily to attain any comprehensive certainty within Protestantism. All he can do is take a “head count” of scholars and pastors and evangelists and Bible Dictionaries and see who lines up where on the various sides of the numerous disagreements. Or else he can uncritically accept the word of whatever denomination with which he is associated.

In effect, then, he is no better off than a beginning philosophy student who prefers Kierkegaard to Kant — the whole procedure (however well-intentioned, and I readily grant that it is) is arbitrary and destined to produce further confusion.

The usual Protestant reply to this critique is that denominations differ mostly over secondary issues, not fundamental or central doctrines. This is often and casually stated, but when scrutinized, it collapses under its own weight. From the beginning, the fault lines of Protestantism appeared when Zwingli and Oecolampadius (two lesser Reformers) differed with Luther on the Real Presence, and the Anabaptists dissented on the Eucharist, infant Baptism, Ordination, and the function of civil authority. Martin Luther regarded these fellow Protestants as “damned” and “out of the Church” for these reasons. He didn’t care much at all for doctrinal disunity among Christians, either.

Reformers John Calvin and Martin Bucer held to a third position on the Eucharist (broadly speaking), intermediate between Luther’s Real Presence (consubstantiation) and Zwingli’s purely symbolic belief. By 1577, the book *200 Interpretations of the Words*, “*This is My Body*” was published at Ingolstadt, Germany. This is the fruit of perspicuity, and it was quick to appear.

Protestants will often maintain that the Eucharist and Baptism, for instance, are neither primary nor essential doctrines. This is curious, since these are the two sacraments that the majority of Protestants accept. Jesus said: “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you” (John 6:53).

This certainly sounds essential, even to the extent that a man’s salvation

might be in jeopardy. St. Paul, too, regards Communion with equally great seriousness and of the utmost importance to one's spiritual well-being and relationship with Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 10:14-22; 11:23-30). Thus, we are already in the realm of salvation — a primary doctrine. Lutherans and many Anglicans (for example, the Oxford Tractarians and C. S. Lewis), believe in the Real Presence, whereas most Evangelicals do not, yet this is not considered cause for alarm or even discomfort.

Protestants differ on other soteriological issues as well: most Methodists, Anglicans, Lutherans, pentecostals, some Baptists, and many nondenominationalists and other groups are Arminian and accept free will and the possibility of falling away from salvation (apostasy), while Presbyterians, Reformed, and a few Baptist denominations and other groups are Calvinist and deny free will and the possibility of apostasy for the elect.

In contrast to the former denominations, the latter groups have a stronger view of the nature of Original Sin, deny that the Atonement is universal, and believe that God predestines the reprobate sinners to Hell before the foundation of the world, with no free will exercised by these damned sinners as to their eternal destiny.

Traditional, orthodox Methodists and many “high church” Anglicans have had views of sanctification (that is, the relationship of faith and works, and of God's enabling and preceding grace and man's cooperation) akin to that of Catholicism. These are questions of how one repents and is saved (justification) and of what is required afterward either to manifest or to maintain this salvation (sanctification and perseverance). Thus, they are primary doctrines, even by standard Protestant criteria.

The same state of affairs is true concerning Baptism, where Protestants are split into infant and adult camps. Furthermore, the infant camp contains those who accept baptismal regeneration (Lutherans, Anglicans, and to some extent, Methodists), as does the adult camp (Churches of Christ and Disciples of Christ). Regeneration absolutely has a bearing on salvation, and therefore is a primary doctrine. The Salvation Army and the Quakers do not baptize at all (the latter does not even celebrate the Eucharist). Thus, there are five distinct competing belief-systems among Protestants with regard to Baptism.

Scripture seems to refer clearly to baptismal regeneration in Acts 2:38 (forgiveness of sins), 22:16 (wash away your sins); Romans 6:3-4; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Titus 3:5 (he saved us . . . by the washing of regeneration), and other passages.

For this reason, many prominent Protestant individuals and denominations have held to the position of baptismal regeneration, which is anathema to the Baptist/Presbyterian/Reformed branch of Protestantism — the predominant evangelical outlook at present (judging by scholarly influence, at any rate).

We need look no further than Martin Luther himself, from whom all Protestants inherit their understanding of both *sola Scriptura* and *sola fide* as the prerequisites for salvation and justification. Luther largely agrees with the Catholic position on sacramental and regenerative infant Baptism:

Little children . . . are free in every way, secure and saved solely through the glory of their baptism. . . . Through the prayer of the believing church which presents it . . . the infant is changed, cleansed, and renewed by in-poured faith. Nor should I doubt that even a godless adult could be changed, in any of the sacraments, if the same church prayed for and presented him, as we read of the paralytic in the Gospel, who was healed through the faith of others (Mark 2:3-12). I should be ready to admit that in this sense the sacraments of the New Law are efficacious in conferring grace, not only to those who do not, but even to those who do most obstinately present an obstacle. [269](#)

Likewise, in his *Large Catechism* (1529), Luther writes:

Expressed in the simplest form, the power, the effect, the benefit, the fruit, and the purpose of Baptism is to save. No one is baptized that he may become a prince, but, as the words declare [of Mark 16:16], “that he may be saved.” But to be saved, we know very well, is to be delivered from sin, death, and Satan, and to enter Christ’s kingdom and live forever with him. . . . Through the Word, baptism receives the power to become the washing of regeneration, as St. Paul calls it in Titus 3:5. . . . Faith clings to the water and believes it to be baptism which effects pure salvation and life. . . .

When sin and conscience oppress us . . . you may say: It is a fact that I am

baptized, but, being baptized, I have the promise that I shall be saved and obtain eternal life for both soul and body. . . . Hence, no greater jewel can adorn our body or soul than baptism; for through it perfect holiness and salvation become accessible to us. . . .²⁷⁰

Anglicanism concurs with Luther on this matter. In its authoritative *Thirty-Nine Articles* (1563, language revised 1801), Article 27, “Of Baptism,” reads as follows:

Baptism is not only a sign of profession, and mark of difference, whereby Christian men are discerned from others that be not christened, but it is also a sign of Regeneration or New-Birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive Baptism rightly are grafted into the Church; the promises of the forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed; Faith is confirmed, and Grace increased by virtue of prayer unto God.

The Baptism of young children is in any wise to be retained in the Church, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ.²⁷¹

John Wesley, who is widely admired by Protestants and Catholics alike, agreed, too, that children are regenerated (and justified initially) by means of infant Baptism. From this position he never wavered. In his *Articles of Religion* (1784), which is a revised version of the Anglican *Articles*, he retains an abridged form of the clause on Baptism (no. 17), stating that it is “a sign of regeneration, or the new birth.”

The doctrine of Baptism in particular, as well as other doctrinal disputes mentioned above, illustrate the irresolvable Protestant dilemma with regard to its fallacious notion of perspicuity. Again, the Bible is obviously not perspicuous enough to eliminate these differences, unless one arrogantly maintains that sin always blinds those in opposing camps from seeing obvious truths, which even a “plowboy” (Luther’s famous phrase) ought to be able to grasp. Obviously, an authoritative (and even infallible) interpreter is needed whether or not the Bible is perspicuous enough to be theoretically understood without help. Nothing could be clearer than that. “Paper infallibility” is no substitute for papal infallibility.

The conclusion is inescapable: either biblical perspicuity is a falsehood, or one or more of the doctrines of regeneration, justification, sanctification, salvation, election, free will, predestination, perseverance, eternal security, the Atonement, Original Sin, the Eucharist, and Baptism, all “five points” of Calvinism (TULIP²⁷²), and the very gospel itself are not central. Protestants can’t have it both ways.

Of course, people like Martin Luther, John Wesley, C. S. Lewis, and denominations such as Methodists, Anglicans, Lutherans, Churches of Christ, and the Salvation Army can be read out of the Christian Faith due to their unorthodoxy, as defined by the self-proclaimed “mainstream” Evangelicals such as Baptists, Presbyterians, and “Reformed” (even the last two groups baptize infants, although they vehemently deny that this causes regeneration).

Since most Protestants are unwilling to anathematize other Protestants, perspicuity dissolves into a boiling cauldron of incomprehensible contradictions, and as such, must be discarded or seriously reformulated in order to harmonize with the Bible and logic.

The Catholic Church at least courageously takes a stand on any given doctrine and refuses to leave whole areas of theology and practice perpetually up for grabs and — too often — mere individualistic whim, fancy, or subjective preference, divorced from considerations of Christian history and consensus. For this so-called “dogmatism” and lack of “flexibility,” the Catholic Church is often reviled and despised. But for those of us who are seeking to be faithful to Christ within her fold, this is regarded, to the contrary, as her unique glory and majesty.

Orthodox Catholics believe that Christians can place full confidence in the firmly established Tradition that is found, not only in holy Scripture, but also in the received doctrines of the Catholic Church, appointed by our Lord Jesus Christ as the guardian and custodian of “the Faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

Appendix Two

The Visible, Hierarchical, Apostolic Church

In the Nicene Creed, which is accepted by most Christians, the Christian Church is described as being “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.” These are known as the four marks of the Church. The notions of *holiness* and *catholicity* are not much in dispute. The mark of holiness may be defined as the possession and dissemination of the sublime, holy, Christ-centered moral code of Christianity (as best exemplified by saints or otherwise great, godly figures). All parties — while disagreeing on many particulars — concur that this is a central function of the Church. *Catholicity* simply means “universal.” Here Protestants and Catholics disagree only on the nature of that Church which is to be considered universal and all-encompassing.

This brings us to the *oneness* and *apostolicity* of the Church, where the disagreements are great indeed. Most Protestants (especially evangelicals) see unity and oneness subsisting primarily or solely in the inner, invisible, spiritual unity of those who are in fact in Christ by virtue of being justified, or “born again,” or regenerated (with or without Baptism, depending on denomination). For them, the church consists of the Spirit-filled, predestined elect, who will persevere and are saved, now and in eternity.

The Catholic Church has always proclaimed this unifying characteristic also, under the broad and rich concept of the Mystical Church (under which it acknowledges Protestantism), yet it does not pit the Mystical Church against the institutional, or visible Church, as most Evangelicals do. For Catholics, then, the issue of oneness is substantially related to organizational and practical aspects of ecclesiology. Catholics believe that the Church is both organism and organization, not merely the former. The Mystical and visible “Churches” are like two circles that largely intersect, but which are not synonymous. They exist together — somewhat paradoxically and with tension — until the “end of the age.” But what kind of organization is this Church, which includes within itself these two aspects (as well as many others)?

At this point in the discussion, Catholics appeal to the hierarchical, or episcopal (that is, under the jurisdiction of bishops), nature of Church

government. Furthermore, Catholics maintain that this form is divinely instituted and biblical, therefore not optional or of secondary theological importance.

Finally, Catholics believe that bishops are — by the intention of Jesus Christ — the successors of the Apostles (the concept of apostolic succession). This is the methodology whereby the Catholic Church traces herself back historically in an unbroken succession to the Apostles and the early Church. Catholicism thus greatly emphasizes historical and doctrinal continuity, whereas Evangelical Protestants are more concerned with maintaining the passion and intense commitment and zeal of the Apostles and early Christians, and are less interested in governmental forms or doctrines that are now regarded as Catholic “distinctives.” They tend to see clearly in the Bible and early Church those doctrines with which they agree, but they overlook those which are more in accordance with Catholicism, such as the episcopacy, Purgatory, and apostolicity.

We shall examine the marks of the Church with which Protestants (notwithstanding many individual exceptions) largely disagree: her visibility, the hierarchy of bishops, apostolic succession, and related issues, such as Ordination, the duties of priests, and sectarianism. Most of these questions are concerned ultimately with authority per se. Protestants emphasize biblical authority, and Catholics ecclesiastical and episcopal leadership, and Tradition. But if the Bible points to and encourages submission to the latter, then the two types of authority cannot (biblically) be opposed.

One of the undeniable aspects of unity and oneness in the Bible is the constant warning (especially in the writings of St. Paul) against (and prohibition of) divisions, schism, and sectarianism, either by command, or by counterexample (Matt. 12:25, 16:18; John 10:16, 17:20-23; Acts 4:32; Rom. 13:13, 16:17; 1 Cor. 1:10-13, 3:3-4, 10:17, 11:18-19, 12:12-27, 14:33; 2 Cor. 12:2; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 4:3-6; Phil. 1:27, 2:2-3; 1 Tim. 6:3-5; Titus 3:9-10; James 3:16; 2 Pet. 2:1). This is clearly no trifling matter. Our Lord even makes unity a means by which the world might believe that the Father sent the Son (John 17:21, 23) and prays that it will be as profound as the unity of the Trinity itself (John 17:21-22). St. Paul makes stirring up division a grounds for virtual exclusion from the Christian community (Rom. 16:17)

and says that divisions (in effect) divide Christ (1 Cor. 1:13). This has always been one of the strengths of the Catholic position over Protestantism, and Protestants are themselves increasingly alarmed over what they consider to be a scandalous concurrence between denominationalism and sectarianism, which all agree is condemned in Scripture.

One of the sincere and seemingly reasonable grounds for forming a new sect is the desire to separate from sinners and sin, which may be infecting the group left. Yet the Bible clearly teaches that the Church (especially in its institutional sense) comprises saints and sinners, good and bad. We see this most indisputably in several parables of Jesus about the kingdom of Heaven (that is, the Church), such as the wheat and the weeds (or tares), where Jesus says that they will grow together until the final Judgment, or harvest time (Matt. 13:24-30; cf. Matt. 3:12). He compares the Church to a fishnet, which draws good and bad fish, ultimately separated (Matt. 13:47-50), and to a marriage banquet, from which one guest was cast out into the outer darkness (Matt. 22:114). This parable ends with the famous phrase, “Many are called, but few are chosen,” which may be interpreted as the distinction between lukewarm, or dead, or nominal Christians and the actual elect, who will be saved in the end. Both are present in the Church, according to Jesus. A similar state of affairs is seen in the parables of the ten virgins (Matt. 25:1-13) and the talents (Matt. 25:14-30). And Jesus’ description of Christians and the Church as a city set on a hill (Matt. 5:14; cf. 5:15-16), is an obvious reference to the visibility of the Church. In no way can this city be regarded as invisible.

Jesus chose Judas as his disciple, even though he knew the future, and he was truly an apostle (Matt. 10:1, 4; Mark 3:14; John 6:70-71; Acts 1:17).

Likewise, St. Paul, in addressing elders (Acts 20:17), states that the Holy Spirit himself has made them bishops (RSV, *guardians*; Greek, *episkopos* — Acts 20:28), yet from among these very same men, heretics and schismatics would arise (Acts 20:30). He echoes this thought in the parable-like verse 2 Timothy 2:20 (see also 2:15-19).

Protestants often cite Jesus’ analogy of sheep and shepherd (John 10:1-16; cf. 2 Tim. 2:19; 1 John 2:19), who *know* each other (John 10:14), as evidence that the Church consists of the elect only. Yet the analogy breaks down when

we find that Scripture also applies the term *sheep* to the unsaved reprobate (Ps. 74:1), the straying (Ps. 119:176), Israel as a nation (Ezek. 34:2-3, 13, 23, 30), and, indeed, all men (Isa. 53:6).

Other passages that presuppose a visible, identifiable, “concrete” Church include Matthew 18:15-17, in which believers are exhorted by our Lord to take errant and obstinate brothers to the Church, which will then determine the appropriate verdict. It would be contrary to the tenor of the New Testament if this were a reference to a local church alone — even apart from the utterly impractical consequences of such a scenario (where the sinner would simply attend another denomination and move on with his life, as is tragically all too often the case today).

And St. Paul, in 1 Timothy 3:15, describes the church of the living God as “the pillar and bulwark of the truth.” This statement is similarly almost nonsensical in the context of competing and often contradictory denominations. Where would a sincere, uninformed, unsophisticated religious seeker go to find this certain truth? Only within the sphere of a serious attempt at actual visible oneness of doctrine can this verse attain any pragmatic possibility.

It is also incorrect to regard St. Paul as some kind of spiritual “lone ranger,” on his own, with no particular ecclesiastical allegiance, since he was commissioned by Jesus himself as an apostle. In his very conversion experience, Jesus informed Paul that he would be told what to do (Acts 9:6; cf. 9:17). He went to see St. Peter in Jerusalem for fifteen days in order to be confirmed in his calling (Gal. 1:18) and fourteen years later was commissioned by Peter, James, and John (Gal. 2:1-2, 9). He was also sent out by the Church at Antioch (Acts 13:1-4), which was in contact with the Church at Jerusalem (Acts 11:19-27). Later on, Paul reported back to Antioch (Acts 14:26-28).

The New Testament refers basically to three types of permanent offices in the Church (apostles and prophets were to cease): bishops (*episkopos*), elders (*presbyteros*, from which are derived *Presbyterian* and *priest*), and deacons (*diakonos*). Bishops are mentioned in Acts 1:20, 20:28; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1-2; Titus 1:7; and 1 Peter 2:25. *Presbyteros* (usually *elder*) appears in passages such as Acts 15:2-6, 21:18; Hebrews 11:2; 1 Peter 5:1;

and 1 Timothy 5:17. Protestants view these leaders as analogous to current-day pastors, while Catholics regard them as priests. Deacons (often *ministers* in English translations) are mentioned in the same fashion as Christian elders with similar frequency (e.g., 1 Cor. 3:5; Phil. 1:1; 1 Thess. 3:2; and 1 Tim. 3:8-13).

As is often the case in theology and practice among the earliest Christians, there is some fluidity and overlapping of these three vocations (for example, compare Acts 20:17 with 20:28; 1 Timothy 3:1-7 with Titus 1:5-9). But this does not prove that three offices of ministry did not exist. For instance, St. Paul often referred to himself as a deacon or minister (1 Cor. 3:5, 4:1; 2 Cor. 3:6, 6:4, 11:23; Eph. 3:7; Col.1:23-25), yet no one would assert that he was merely a deacon, and nothing else. Likewise, St. Peter calls himself a fellow elder (1 Pet. 5:1), whereas Jesus calls him the rock upon which he would build his Church, and gave him alone the keys of the kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 16:18-19). These examples are usually indicative of a healthy humility, according to Christ's injunctions of servanthood (Matt. 23:11-12; Mark 10:43-44).

Upon closer observation, clear distinctions of office appear, and the hierarchical nature of Church government in the New Testament emerges. Bishops are always referred to in the singular, while elders are usually mentioned plurally. The primary controversy among Christians has to do with the nature and functions of bishops and elders (deacons have largely the same duties among both Protestants and Catholics).

Catholics contend that the elders/presbyters in Scripture carry out all the functions of the Catholic priest:

- *Sent and commissioned by Jesus* (the notion of being called): Mark 6:7; John 15:5, 20:21; Romans 10:15; 2 Corinthians 5:20.
- *Representatives of Jesus*: Luke 10:16; John 13:20.
- *Authority to "bind" and "loose"* (Penance and absolution): Matthew 18:18 (cf. Matthew 16:19).
- *Power to forgive sins in Jesus' name*: Luke 24:47; John 20:21-23; 2 Corinthians 2:5-11; James 5:15.
- *Authority to administer penance*: Acts 5:2-11; 1 Corinthians 5:3-13; 2 Corinthians 5:18; 1 Timothy 1:18-20; Titus 3:10.

- *Power to conduct the Eucharist:* Luke 22:19; Acts 2:42 (cf. Luke 24:35; Acts 2:46, 20:7; 1 Corinthians 10:16).
- *Power to dispense sacraments:* 1 Corinthians 4:1; James 5:13-15.
- *Power to baptize:* Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38, 41.
- *Ordained:* Acts 14:23; 1 Timothy 4:14, 5:23.
- *Pastors (shepherds):* Acts 20:17, 28; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 5:1-4.
- *Authority to preach and teach:* 1 Timothy 3:1-2; 5:17.
- *Authority to evangelize:* Matthew 16:15, 28:19-20; Mark 3:14; Luke 9:2, 6, 24:47; Acts 1:8.
- *Power to heal:* Matthew 10:1; Luke 9:1-2, 6.
- *Power to cast out demons:* Matthew 10:1; Mark 3:15; Luke 9:1.
- *Authority to hear confessions:* Acts 19:18 (cf. Matthew 3:6; Mark 1:5; James 5:16; 1 John 1:8-9; presupposed in John 20:23).
- *Celibacy for those called to it:* Matthew 19:12; 1 Corinthians 7:7-9, 20, 25-38 (especially 7:35).
- *Enjoy Christ's perpetual presence and assistance in a special way:* Matthew 28:20.

Protestants — following Luther — cite 1 Peter 2:5, 9 (see also Revelation 1:6) to prove that *all* Christians are priests. But this does not exclude a specially ordained, sacramental priesthood, since St. Peter was reflecting the language of Exodus 19:6, where the Jews were described in this fashion. Since the Jews had a separate Levitical priesthood, by analogy 1 Peter 2:9 cannot logically exclude a New Testament ordained priesthood. These texts are concerned with priestly *holiness*, as opposed to priestly *function*. The universal sense, for instance, never refers to the Eucharist or to the sacraments. Every Christian is a priest in terms of offering the sacrifices of prayer (Heb. 13:15), almsgiving (Heb. 13:16), and faith in Jesus (Phil. 2:17).

Bishops (*episkopos*) possess all the powers, duties, and jurisdiction of priests, with these important additional responsibilities:

- *Jurisdiction over priests and local churches, and the power to ordain priests:* Acts 14:22; 1 Timothy 5:22; 2 Timothy 1:6; Titus 1:5.
- *Special responsibility to defend the Faith:* Acts 20:28-31; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; Titus 1:9-10; 2 Peter 3:15-16.
- *Power to rebuke false doctrine and to excommunicate:* Acts 8:14-24; 1

- Corinthians 16:22; 1 Timothy 5:20; 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:10-11.
- *Power to bestow Confirmation* (the receiving of the indwelling Holy Spirit): Acts 8:14-17; 19:5-6.
 - *Management of Church finances*: 1 Timothy 3:3-4; 1 Peter 5:2.

In the Septuagint, *episkopos* is used for “overseer” in various senses, for example: officers (Judg. 9:28; Isa. 60:17), supervisors of funds (2 Chron. 34:12, 17), overseers of priests and Levites (Neh. 11:9; 2 Kings 11:18), and of temple and tabernacle functions (Num. 4:16). God is called *episkopos* in Job 20:29, referring to his role as Judge, and Christ is an *episkopos* in 1 Peter 2:25 (RSV: “Shepherd and Guardian of your souls”).

The Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-29) bears witness to a definite hierarchical, episcopal structure of government in the early Church. St. Peter, the chief elder (the office of Pope) of the entire Church (1 Peter 5:1; cf. John 21:15-17), presided and issued the authoritative pronouncement (15:7-11). Then James, Bishop of Jerusalem (rather like the host-mayor of a conference) gives a concurring (Acts 15:14) concluding statement (15:13-29). That James was the sole, “monarchical” bishop of Jerusalem is fairly apparent from Scripture (Acts 12:17, 15:13, 19, 21:18; Gal. 1:19, 2:12). This fact is also attested by the first Christian historian, Eusebius (*History of the Church*, 7:19).

Much historical and patristic evidence also exists for the bishopric of St. Peter at Rome. No one disputes the fact that St. Clement (d. c. 101) was the sole Bishop of Rome a little later, or that St. Ignatius (d. c. 110) was the Bishop of Antioch, starting around 69 A.D. Thus, the “monarchical” bishop is both a biblical concept and an unarguable fact of the early Church. By the time we get to the mid-second century, virtually all historians hold that single bishops led each Christian community. This was to be the case in all Christendom, East and West, until Luther transferred this power to the secular princes in the sixteenth century, and the Anabaptist tradition eschewed ecclesiastical office either altogether or in large part. Today many denominations have no bishops at all.

One may concede all the foregoing as true, yet deny apostolic succession, whereby these offices are passed down, or handed down, through the generations and centuries, much like sacred Tradition. But this belief of the

Catholic Church (along with Eastern Orthodoxy and Anglicanism) is also grounded in Scripture.

St. Paul teaches us (Eph. 2:20) that the Church is built on the foundation of the Apostles, whom Christ himself chose (John 6:70; Acts 1:2, 13; cf. Matt. 16:18). In Mark 6:30, the twelve original disciples of Jesus are called Apostles, and Matthew 10:1-5 and Revelation 21:14 speak of the twelve Apostles. After Judas defected, the remaining eleven Apostles appointed his successor, Matthias (Acts 1:20-26). Since Judas is called a bishop (*episkopos*) in this passage (1:20), then, by logical extension, all the Apostles can be considered bishops (albeit of an extraordinary sort).

If the Apostles are bishops, and one of them was replaced by another, after the death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Christ, then we have an explicit example of apostolic succession in the Bible, taking place before 35 A.D. In like fashion, St. Paul appears to pass on his office to Timothy (2 Tim. 4:1-6), shortly before his death, around 65 A.D. This succession shows an authoritative equivalency between Apostles and bishops, who are the successors of the Apostles. As a corollary, we are also informed in Scripture that the Church herself is perpetual, infallible, and indefectible (Matt. 16:18; John 14:26, 16:18). Why should the early Church be set up in one form and the later Church in another?

All of this biblical data is harmonious with the ecclesiological views of the Catholic Church. There has been some development over the centuries, but in all essentials, the biblical Church and clergy and the Catholic Church and clergy are one and the same.

The historical evidence of the earliest Christians after the Apostles and the Church Fathers is quite compelling as well: there exists virtually unanimous consent as to the episcopal, hierarchical, visible nature of the Church, which proceeds authoritatively down through history by virtue of apostolic succession.

St. Clement, Bishop of Rome, teaches apostolic succession around 80 A.D. (*Epistle to Corinthians*, 42:4-5, 44:1-3), and St. Irenaeus is a very strong witness to and advocate of this tradition in the last two decades of the second century (*Against Heresies*, 3:3:1, 4; 4:26:2; 5:20:1; 33:8). Eusebius, the first

historian of the Church, in his *History of the Church* (c. 325), begins by saying that one of the “chief matters” to be dealt with in his work is “the lines of succession from the holy Apostles.”²⁷³

With regard to the threefold ministry of bishop, priest (elder; *presbyteros*), and deacon, St. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, offers remarkable testimony, around 110: *Letter to the Magnesians*, 2, 6:1, 13:1-2; *Letter to the Trallians*, 2:1-3, 3:1-2, 7:2; *Letter to the Philadelphians*, 7:1-2; *Letter to the Smyrnaeans*, 8:1-2 — the last also being the first reference to the “Catholic Church.” St. Clement of Rome refers to the “high priest” and “priests” of Christians around 96 (*1 Clement*, 40). Other prominent early witnesses include St. Hippolytus (*Apostolic Tradition*, 9) and St. Clement of Alexandria (*Stromateis*, 6:13:107:2), both in the early third century.

John Calvin himself, contrary to many of his later followers, taught that the Church was visible and a “Mother” (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, IV, 1, 1; IV, 1, 4; IV, 1, 13-14), the wrongness of sectarianism and schism (IV, 1, 5; IV, 1, 10-15), and that the Church includes sinners and “hypocrites” (IV, 1, 7; IV, 1, 13-15 — he cites Matthew 13:24-30, 47-58).

Appendix Three

The Historical Case for the “Apocrypha”

The Old Testament in Catholic Bibles contains seven more books than are found in Protestant Bibles (forty-six and thirty-nine, respectively). Protestants call these books the Apocrypha, and Catholics know them as the deuterocanonical books: Tobit, Judith, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus (or Sirach), and Baruch. Also, Catholic Bibles contain an additional six chapters (107 verses) in the book of Esther and an additional three (174 verses) in the book of Daniel. These books and chapters were found in Bible manuscripts in Greek only and were not part of the Hebrew Canon of the Old Testament, as determined by the Jews.

All of these were dogmatically acknowledged as Scripture at the Council of Trent in 1548 (which means that Catholics were henceforth not allowed to question their canonicity), although the tradition of their inclusion was ancient. At the same time, the council rejected 1 and 2 Esdras and the Prayer of Manasses as part of Sacred Scripture (these are often included in collections of the “Apocrypha” as a separate unit).

The Catholic perspective on this issue is widely misunderstood (insofar as it can be said to be known at all). Protestants accuse Catholics of “adding” books to the Bible, while Catholics retort that Protestants have “booted out” part of Scripture. Catholics are able to offer very solid and reasonable arguments in defense of the scriptural status of the deuterocanonical books. These can be summarized as follows:

- They were included in the Septuagint, which was the “Bible” of the Apostles. They usually quoted the Old Testament Scriptures (in the text of the New Testament) from the Septuagint.
- Almost all of the Church Fathers regarded the Septuagint as the standard form of the Old Testament. The deuterocanonical books were in no way differentiated from the other books in the Septuagint, and were generally regarded as canonical. St. Augustine thought the Septuagint was apostolically sanctioned and inspired, and this was the consensus in the early Church.
- Many Church Fathers (such as St. Irenaeus, St. Cyprian, and Tertullian)

cite these books as Scripture without distinction. Others, mostly from the East (for example, St. Athanasius, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, and St. Gregory Nazianzen) recognized some distinction, but nevertheless still customarily cited the deuterocanonical books as Scripture. St. Jerome, who translated the Hebrew Bible into Latin (the Vulgate, early fifth century), was an exception to the rule (the Church has never held that individual Fathers are infallible).

- The Church councils at Hippo (393) and Carthage (397, 419), influenced heavily by St. Augustine, listed the deuterocanonical books as Scripture, which was simply an endorsement of what had become the general consensus of the Church in the West and most of the East. Thus, the Council of Trent merely reiterated in stronger terms what had already been decided eleven and a half centuries earlier, and which had never been seriously challenged until the onset of Protestantism.
- Since these councils also finalized the sixty-six canonical books that all Christians accept, it is quite arbitrary for Protestants selectively to delete seven books from this authoritative Canon.

This is all the more curious when the complicated, controversial history of the New Testament Canon is understood.

- Pope Innocent I concurred with and sanctioned the canonical ruling of the above councils (*Letter to Exsuperius, Bishop of Toulouse*) in 405.
- The earliest Greek manuscripts of the Old Testament, such as *Codex Sinaiticus* (fourth century) and *Codex Alexandrinus* (c. 450) include all of the deuterocanonical books mixed in with the others and not separated.
- The practice of collecting the deuterocanonical books into a separate unit dates back no further than 1520 (in other words, it was a novel innovation of Protestantism). This is admitted by, for example, the Protestant New English Bible in its “Introduction to the Apocrypha.”²⁷⁴
- Protestants, following Martin Luther, removed the deuterocanonical books from their Bibles, due to their clear teaching of doctrines that had been recently repudiated by Protestants, such as prayers for the dead (Tob. 12:12; 2 Mac. 12:39-45; cf. 1 Cor. 15:29), the intercession of dead saints (2 Mac. 15:14; cf. Rev. 6:9-10), and the intermediary intercession of angels (Tob. 12:12, 15; cf. Rev. 5:8, 8:3-4). We know this from plain

statements of Luther and other Reformers.

- Luther was not content even to let the matter rest there, and proceeded to cast doubt on many other books of the Bible that are accepted as canonical by all Protestants. He considered Job and Jonah mere fables, and Ecclesiastes incoherent and incomplete. He wished that Esther (along with 2 Maccabees) “did not exist,” and wanted to “toss it into the Elbe” River.
- The New Testament fared scarcely better under Luther’s gaze. He rejected from the New Testament Canon (“chief books”) Hebrews, James (“epistle of straw”), Jude, and Revelation, and he placed them at the end of his translation, as a New Testament Apocrypha. He regarded them as nonapostolic. Of the book of Revelation he said, “Christ is not taught or known in it.” These opinions are found in Luther’s Prefaces to biblical books, in his German translation of 1522.
- Although the New Testament does not quote any of these books directly, it does closely reflect the thought of the deuterocanonical books in many passages. For example, Revelation 1:4 and 8:3-4 appear to make reference to Tobit 12:15:

Revelation 1:4: “Grace to you . . . from the seven spirits who are before his throne” (see also 3:1; 4:5; 5:6).

Revelation 8:3-4: “And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer; and he was given much incense to mingle with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar before the throne; and the smoke of the incense rose with the prayers of the saints from the hand of the angel before God” (see also 5:8).

Tobit 12:15: “I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels who present the prayers of the saints and enter into the presence of the glory of the Holy One.”

St. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15:29, seems to have 2 Maccabees 12:44 in mind. This saying is one of the most difficult in the New Testament for Protestants to interpret, given their theology:

1 Corinthians 15:29: “Otherwise, what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people

baptized on their behalf?”

2 Maccabees 12:44: “For if he were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead.”

This passage of St. Paul shows that it was the custom of the early Church to watch, pray, and fast for the souls of the deceased. In Scripture, to be baptized is often a metaphor for affliction or (in the Catholic understanding) penance (e.g., Matt. 3:11; Mark 10:38-39; Luke 3:16, 12:50). Since those in Heaven have no need of prayer, and those in Hell can’t benefit from it, these practices, sanctioned by St. Paul, must be directed toward those in Purgatory. Otherwise, prayers and penances for the dead make no sense, and this seems to be largely what Paul is trying to bring out. The “penance interpretation” is contextually supported by the next three verses, where St. Paul speaks of “Why am I in peril every hour? . . . I die every day,” and so forth.

As a third example, Hebrews 11:35 mirrors the thought of 2 Maccabees 7:29:

Hebrews 11:35: “Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, that they might rise again to a better life.”

2 Maccabees 7:29: “Do not fear this butcher, but prove worthy of your brothers. Accept death, so that in God’s mercy I may get you back again with your brothers (a mother speaking to her son: see 7:25-26).”

- Ironically, in some of the same verses in which the New Testament is virtually quoting the “Apocrypha,” doctrines are taught that are rejected by Protestants, and which were a major reason why the deuterocanonical books were “demoted” by them. Therefore, it was not as easy to eliminate these disputed doctrines from the Bible as it was (and is) supposed, and Protestants still must grapple with much New Testament data that do not comport with their beliefs.
- Despite this lowering of the status of the deuterocanonical books by Protestantism, the books were still widely retained separately in Protestant Bibles for a long period (unlike the prevailing practice today). John Wycliffe, considered a forerunner of Protestantism, included them

in his English translation. Luther himself kept them separately in his Bible, describing them generally as (although subscriptural) “useful and good to read.” Zwingli and the Swiss Protestants, and the Anglicans maintained them in this secondary sense also. The English Geneva Bible (1560) and Bishop’s Bible (1568) both included them as a unit. Even the Authorized, or King James, Version of 1611 contained the “Apocrypha” as a matter of course. And up to the present, many Protestant Bibles continue this practice. The revision of the King James Bible (completed in 1895) included these books, as did the Revised Standard Version (1957), the New English Bible (1970), and the Good-speed Bible (1939), among others.

- The deuterocanonical books are read regularly in public worship in Anglicanism, and also among the Eastern Orthodox, and most Protestants and Jews fully accept their value as historical and religious documents, useful for teaching, even though they deny the books full canonical status.

It is apparent, then, that the Catholic “case” for these books carries a great deal of weight, certainly at the very least equal to the Protestant view.

Appendix Four

The Biblical Basis for Clerical Celibacy

With regard to clerical, or priestly, celibacy, Protestants (and today, many Catholics) often mirror Luther's viewpoint that chastity is well-nigh impossible. Orthodox Catholics contend that such a view is not biblical. Our Lord Jesus and St. Paul were of a different opinion. Jesus said:

For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of Heaven. He who is able to receive this, let him receive it" (Matt. 19:12).

Other modern translations use the phrase "others have renounced marriage." One might argue that Jesus was merely describing this state of affairs, not sanctioning it, but this is made implausible by his concluding comment, "He who is able to receive this, let him receive it."

But if it is to be denied that Jesus taught the desirability of celibacy for those called to it, there can be little doubt about St. Paul's position, expressed in great detail in 1 Corinthians 7:7-9, 20, 27-28, 32-35, 38:

I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own special gift from God, one of one kind and one of another. To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is well for them to remain single as I do. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion. . . . Every one should remain in the state in which he was called. . . .

Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek marriage. But if you marry, you do not sin. . . . Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that. . . .

I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord; but the married man is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided. And the unmarried woman or girl is anxious about the affairs of

the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit; but the married woman is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please her husband.

I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord. . . . So that he who marries his betrothed does well; and he who refrains from marriage will do better.

These verses are the scriptural rationale for the much-maligned Catholic requirement of celibacy for priests, monks, and nuns. St. Paul's argument is clear enough, for anyone able to receive it. The celibate priest can single-heartedly devote himself both to God and to his flock. The practical advantages of having more time and not being burdened by multiple loyalties are obvious.

Why, then, is there so much uproar today (as there was in Luther's era) over this disciplinary requirement? (It is neither a dogma nor irreversible, although it is firmly established in Catholic Tradition.) I submit that it is a lack of belief in the power of God to assist one in such a difficult life-choice, especially given the present sexually crazed atmosphere. Opponents of celibacy often simply assume, like Luther, that a life without sex is utterly impossible, whereas our Lord Jesus and St. Paul undeniably teach the contrary, and the desirability — even preferability — of celibacy for those so called. One must make a choice for or against the biblical teaching. If sexual abstinence is impossible and “unnatural,” men and women are reduced to the level of mere beasts, devoid of God's image and strengthening power, utterly unable to control their appetites and passions. This is not the Christian view!

It needs to be stressed at this point that no one is *forced* to be celibate. It is a matter of personal choice and, on a deeper level, an acceptance of one's calling, as given by God. Paul acknowledges both the divine impetus (1 Cor. 7:7, 20) and the free-will initiative of human beings (1 Cor. 7:35, 38). These two are not contradictory, but rather, complementary. In other words, if a man is called to celibacy (and further, to the priesthood in the Latin, Western Rites), he will be given both the desire and the ability to carry out this lifestyle successfully (see Phil. 2:13). If one is not called, like most of us, to celibacy or the priesthood, or both, then he or she ought to get married (1 Cor. 7:7, 9, 20, 28, 38).

The issue is not a matter of either-or, with one option being good and the other bad. Both are good, but one has a certain practical superiority and a somewhat heroic aspect. To renounce personally something is not equivalent to regarding the state or thing renounced as evil. I may give up eating potatoes, reading fiction, ice-skating, or swimming, for various reasons, but this does not make any of them evil in and of themselves.

Likewise, the Catholic Church is not in any sense whatsoever against marriage or sexuality (1 Cor. 7:38), as long as these are within the proper biblical and moral guidelines. Marriage and Ordination are both sacraments in Catholicism; both are positive and wonderful means of God's grace. The Catholic view of holy Matrimony, which considers a valid, sacramental marriage between two baptized Catholics absolutely indissoluble, provides women in particular with the greatest degree of security and dignity known to history (we are already reaping the bitter fruit of today's "easy divorcism"). The Church wants only to see everyone fulfill the estate in life to which they are called (1 Cor. 7:20).

Every Roman Catholic priest takes vows of chastity and obedience. No one is compelled to become a Catholic priest, and the complaining and moaning of those who have ill-advisedly taken on such a commitment, or, who (through loss of the supernatural virtue of faith) no longer believe it to be possible, is unjustified. Anyone who is not called to celibacy is free to become a married priest in the Orthodox or Anglican Churches (or even in the Eastern Rites of the Catholic Church, where married men can be ordained).

When Catholic priests today forsake their vows of Ordination (usually taking on wives), this is no disproof whatsoever of the Catholic doctrine of the desirability of celibacy, but rather, an indication that (oftentimes) something was seriously awry in the intellectual honesty of these men or in the perception of God's calling in their lives. Again, no one forced any of these men to take the vows they did, and it is improper for them to complain about it after the fact. This is as foolish and silly as a man's whining that he cannot join the army because he cannot stand constantly being with thirty other men!

Numerous other analogies could be given. Every institution has the inherent right to create whatever rules and regulations it deems necessary for its purposes. In this case, the Catholic Church is simply trying to follow the clear

recommendations of its Lord and one of the premier apostles, St. Paul, and to go against the grain of today's decadent culture, where unrestrained sex has often replaced the quest for God and righteousness and has become an idol.

Furthermore, today there seems to be a lack of understanding (or downright denigration) of the validity and seriousness of vows and oaths, from the biblical and Christian perspective. We see how lightly the marital vows are taken by many in our time; "for better or worse" and "till death do us part" are almost forgotten by thousands, it seems. The Law of Moses made vows and oaths sacredly and solemnly binding (Exod. 20:7; Lev. 19:12; Deut. 5:11, 23:21-23). Ezekiel says that perjury is punishable by death (Ezek. 17:16-18). Jesus taught that oaths were binding (Matt. 5:33). St. Paul once had his hair cut off as the result of a vow of some sort (Acts 18:18). Even God bound Himself by an oath (Heb. 6:13-18). The notion of covenant is closely related to oath-taking. A deceptive vow is an affront to God and brings about His curse (Mal. 1:14; Eccles. 5:4-5). Vowing is completely voluntary and optional in biblical thought, but once made, the vow must be performed and is a very serious matter indeed.

Sadly, many "former" priests, rather than face honestly their own inadequacies, choose instead to cast doubt on the Church's teaching on celibacy in general, which causes them ultimately to deny the affirmations of both Jesus and St. Paul on this subject. No amount of admitted difficulty (no one maintains the easiness of abstention) or self-serving rationalization can undo the plain teaching of holy Scripture in this regard. There is an old proverb to the effect that "all heresy begins below the belt." This is certainly not the reason for all priestly defections, but it is undoubtedly true far more often than is admitted. Priests, even "good" ones, are fallen and fallible human beings — like all of us — subject to temptations and moral lapses, and are special targets of Satan due to their lofty office. They need our prayers continually.

Appendix Five

A Dialogue on Infant Baptism

Zeke the “Jesus Freak”: Hey, Cathy, why do Catholics baptize babies? It’s pointless since babies don’t know what’s going on and can’t *repent*, according to Acts 2:38 and Mark 6:16.

Cathy the Catholic: But where in the Bible does it specifically *prohibit* the Baptism of babies?

Zeke: Well . . . I guess it never says *that*. But . . .

Cathy: But don’t you only follow what’s plainly taught in the pages of Scripture?

Zeke: It’s a conclusion that follows from *ideas* that are clearly in Scripture. It’s still a *biblical doctrine*.

Cathy: Ah! That’s a big difference. Now we’re both in the same boat, since the Bible doesn’t *explicitly* teach about Baptism of infants. We must make inferences. Catholics maintain that there are many strong *indications* of our view.

Zeke: Where? I’ve never seen any in seventeen years of being saved.

Cathy: In Acts 16:15, 33, 18:8 [cf. 11:14], and 1 Corinthians 1:16, it is stated that an individual and his whole household were baptized. It would be hard to say this involved no small children. Paul in Colossians 2:11-13 makes a connection between Baptism and circumcision. Israel was the church before Christ [Acts 7:38; Rom. 9:4]. Circumcision, given to eight-day-old boys, was the seal of the covenant God made with Abraham, which applies to us also [Gal. 3:14, 29]. It was a sign of repentance and future faith [Rom. 4:11]. Infants were just as much a part of the covenant as adults were [Gen. 17:7; Deut. 29:10-12; cf. Matt. 19:14]. Likewise, Baptism is the seal of the New Covenant in Christ. It signifies cleansing from sin, just as circumcision did [Deut. 10:16, 30:6; Jer. 4:4, 9:25; Rom. 2:28-29; Phil. 3:3]. Infants are wholly saved by God’s grace, just as adults are, only apart from their rational and

willful consent. Their parents act in their behalf.

Zeke: That's not possible. You have to repent and be born again in order to receive salvation, as John 3:5 says.

Cathy: It doesn't exactly say that. It says that one "must be born of water and the Spirit." Catholics, along with the Church Fathers such as St. Augustine and many Protestants (for example, Lutherans and Anglicans), interpret this as a reference to Baptism, and a proof of the necessity of infant Baptism.

Zeke: That doesn't make sense. *Water* here refers to the amniotic sac when a baby is born. Babies can't be born again. Jesus is contrasting natural with spiritual birth.

Cathy: Are you saying then that a baby can't be *saved* and will go to Hell if he dies before the "age of reason"?

Zeke: No, no. I would never say that. God is too merciful to let that happen to an innocent little baby.

Cathy: But you believe in Original Sin [1 Cor. 15:22], inherited by all people from the Fall of Adam and Eve, right?

Zeke: Well, yeah. What are you getting at?

Cathy: Once you say that a baby can be saved, then clearly there is a justification for baptizing infants, since there are factors other than their own consent that enter into the question of their salvation. Thus, you have arrived at a more communal, covenantal view of salvation — see, for example, 1 Corinthians 7:14, 12:13 — rather than the individualistic notion that many Evangelicals have. The reality of Original Sin makes Baptism desirable as soon as possible, since it removes the punishment and guilt due to sin and infuses sanctifying grace. This is why most Protestants through history, including Lutherans, Anglicans, Methodists, Reformed, and Presbyterians, have baptized infants.

Zeke: Now, wait a minute. Surely you don't believe that Baptism actually *does* anything, do you? It's only a symbol.

Cathy: You Evangelicals always seem to deny that matter can be a conveyor of grace and too often frown on the idea of sacraments, which are physical, visible means whereby grace is conferred.

Zeke: We don't believe in those things because they're not biblical. The Bible talks about the Spirit giving grace [John 6:63; Rom. 8:1-10], not matter. Catholics are always getting weird about *things*, such as statues, relics, rosary beads, the wafer of Communion, and holy water. This usually degenerates into idolatry.

Cathy: I disagree. God himself took on flesh in Christ. Paul's handkerchiefs healed the sick [Acts 19:12], as did Peter's shadow [Acts 5:15]! Likewise, Baptism is said to regenerate sinners. Acts 2:38 speaks of being baptized for the forgiveness of your sins. 1 Peter 3:21 says, "Baptism . . . now saves you" [cf. Mark 16:16; Rom. 6:3-4]. Paul recalls how Ananias told him to "be baptized, and wash away your sins" [Acts 22:16]. In 1 Corinthians 6:11, Paul sure seems to imply an organic connection between Baptism (washed), sanctification, and justification, whereas Evangelicals separate all three. Titus 3:5 says that "he saved us . . . by the washing of regeneration." What more biblical proof is needed? Is this all to be explained as "symbolic"?

Zeke: I gotta run. I have some questions for my pastor. . . .

Appendix Six

A Dialogue on Liturgy and “Vain Worship”

Nona the nondenominational Protestant: I don’t understand, Peter, why Catholics keep putting up with the same old empty form prayers and rituals every Sunday at Mass. Don’t you ever have the desire to grow in the Lord and feel God’s presence and praise him exuberantly?

Peter the “Papist”: How do you know that all Catholics don’t “feel” anything, or desire to grow? That seems pretty judgmental to me. Sure, many Catholics are nominal and spiritually cold, but we don’t have a monopoly on that characteristic — not by a long shot!

Nona: I can say that because the Mass is simply vain repetition, which Jesus condemned in Matthew 6:7. Since it isn’t spontaneous, it can’t be from the Holy Spirit, but merely a dead tradition of men. It’s not alive and spiritual, like our service. We’re on fire.

Peter: I think that you make a lot of unwarranted conclusions. First of all, repetition in and of itself isn’t always a bad thing. You overlook the fact that Jesus says *vain* repetition. *Vain* means having excessive pride or conceit. So the Lord is condemning prayers uttered without the proper reverence or respect for God. As usual, he is concerned with the inner dispositions of the worshiper — see, for example, Isaiah 1:11-15 and Matthew 7:20-23, 15:9 — not with outward appearance, as you seem to emphasize. God sees the heart. Besides, if repetition itself is wrong, Protestants are as guilty of it as we are. Lutherans, Anglicans, and Methodists are just as liturgical as Catholics, with Presbyterians not far behind. All have form prayers and creeds, such as the Nicene Creed, which are repeated every Sunday. Even the Baptists have a set routine they stick to.

Nona: Don’t lump me in with *them*. I’m a nondenominational Christian. I’m not a Protestant. That’s just a label and tradition of men. I go by the Bible alone.

Peter: Evangelical Protestants are always saying that they’re merely following the Bible’s clear teaching, but that’s another subject. Anyway,

pentecostal, charismatic, “Spirit-filled” services are just as repetitious as more liturgical, ordered churches. Your position amounts to a plain old prejudice against written, traditional prayer. This proves too much, since the Lord’s Prayer, and many of the Psalms would become vain repetition as well; for example, in Psalm 136, the same exact phrase is repeated for twenty-six straight verses! Since Scripture is “God-breathed,” if you’re correct, this would mean that God himself indulged in the very practice he condemns elsewhere.

Nona: Well, I guess you’ve got a point there, but I still say that our services are more on fire since they’re led by the spontaneous leading of the Spirit.

Peter: Having participated in both types of worship, I can tell you that your services — edifying as they may be — have just as much form and repetition, conscious or not, as anyone’s. The music and prayer portions always seem to last the same amount of time, and then comes prophecy, the collection, a forty-five-minute sermon, and so on. The praises almost invariably are “Praise you, Jesus,” “Hallelujah,” “Glory to you, Lord,” over and over. The prophecies vary little. I heard a “prophecy” on two occasions at my church where a person blurted out, “I am the *alfalfa* and the Omega [laughs].”²⁷⁵ If Catholic worship is supposedly so “dead,” I could say that informal worship can be excessively emotional and sometimes downright silly — not always “spiritual.” No Christian group is above criticism or unable to benefit from others in many ways.

Nona: You know, I’ve never thought about all this in the way you have. But I’ve been on both sides, too. When I was Catholic, I used to get so bored at Mass. I wasn’t convicted or challenged. It was so dry and meaningless, and the homilies left much to be desired. I never heard the gospel until I got saved twelve years ago.

Peter: I don’t know how you could never get challenged or not hear the gospel. At every Sunday Mass, there are four Bible readings from the Old Testament, the Psalms, the Gospels, and the Epistles — far more than at Protestant services. Sure, the homilies aren’t always as interesting and “meaty” (in a certain sense) as Protestant ones. I admit that you guys win hands down today when it comes to fiery, stirring oratory, but as an adult, you can easily read all the theology and sermons you want. The potential for

learning is unlimited. For example, if you want great preaching and food for thought from Catholics, I suggest you read the sermons of St. Augustine, or St. John Chrysostom, or John Henry Newman. Evangelicals love to read Scripture; they could benefit by reading the works of great Christians of the past also. There is a long, fabulous Christian heritage just waiting to be discovered by each Christian.

Nona: Perhaps you're right about that, but isn't the purpose of going to church to be fed and to gear up for the week, with all its problems and stress? I need to be exhorted and encouraged.

Peter: Those aspects are valid, but I would say with all due respect, that being "fed" is for spiritual babies [1 Cor. 3:1-2; Heb. 5:12-14]. The rest of us can feed ourselves. The Mass requires some work and active participation, as Vatican II stresses. The word *liturgy* means "work of the people." The informed, committed Catholic doesn't go to church primarily to "feel good," to "get fed," or to "get moral support," but to engage in the work of worshiping God with his whole being, including his mind [Luke 10:27], and to receive him in Communion. Even if one doesn't feel anything, it is worthwhile to be obedient to God and worship him simply for who he is.

Nona: I . . . um . . . maybe I've been too harsh on Catholics, and judgmental. I suppose Mass wasn't all bad all the time. Perhaps I was uninformed and lax and didn't make enough effort to learn its true meaning.

Peter: You know, Nona, there are charismatic Masses, which combine both traditional and contemporary worship — in a sense, the best of both worlds. They're usually a little more spontaneous and have more lively worship-singing. (I admit, Catholics generally sing terribly or not at all!) Yet, the structure of the Mass and the Liturgy is respected and not violated. You might like the homilies a little better, too.

Nona: I have to admit you've really challenged me to examine some of my positions. I'll have to think about this some more. Thanks, and let's discuss this again.

Recommended Apologetic and Historical Works

See my extensive web page: *Catholic Books, Authors, and Cultural Heritage*: <http://ic.net/~erasmus/BOOKREV.HTM>. Also, see links to used theological books online, on my web page: *Christian Online Books and Search*: <http://ic.net/~erasmus/RAZ17.HTM>.

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Biographical Note

Dave Armstrong

Dave Armstrong is a Catholic writer, apologist, and evangelist, who has been actively proclaiming and defending Christianity for more than twenty years. Formerly a campus missionary, as a Protestant, Armstrong was received into the Catholic Church in 1991 by the late, well-known catechist and theologian Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J.

Armstrong's conversion story appeared in the bestselling book *Surprised by Truth* and his articles have been published in a number of Catholic periodicals, including *The Catholic Answer*, *This Rock*, *Envoy*, *Hands On Apologetics*, *The Coming Home Journal*, and *The Latin Mass*. His apologetic and writing apostolate was the subject of a feature article in the May 2002 issue of *Envoy*. Armstrong is the author of the book *More Biblical Evidence for Catholicism* and of forty-four apologetics articles in *The Catholic Answer Bible*.

His website (www.biblicalcatholic.com), *Biblical Evidence for Catholicism*, online since March 1997, received the 1998 Catholic Website of the Year award from *Envoy*, which also nominated Armstrong himself for Best New Evangelist.

Armstrong and his wife, Judy, and their four children live near Detroit, Michigan.

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Footnotes

- ¹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Bk. 4, ch. 10; G. C. Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics: Holy Scripture*, trans. Jack B. Rogers (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1975), 299-300, 306; Marty, *A Short History of Christianity* (New York: Meridian, 1959), 216.
- ² Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Bk. 1, chs. 6-9; Clark Pinnock, *Biblical Revelation* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 113-17.
- ³ Martin Luther, *On the Councils and the Churches*, 1539; R. C. Sproul, “*Sola Scriptura*: Crucial to Evangelicalism,” in James Montgomery Boice, ed., *The Foundation of Biblical Authority* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1978), 109; Robert McAfee Brown, *The Spirit of Protestantism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 67.
- ⁴ Pinnock, *Biblical Revelation*, 118-119; Brown, *The Spirit of Protestantism*, 215-216.
- ⁵ Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics*, 268-271, 286, 305; Brown, *The Spirit of Protestantism*, 171; Marty, *A Short History of Christianity*, 206.
- ⁶ Bernard Ramm, “Is ‘Scripture Alone’ the Essence of Christianity?” in Jack B. Rogers, ed., *Biblical Authority* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1977), 116-117, 119, 121-122.
- ⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*, par. 80; John A. Hardon, *The Catholic Catechism (CC)* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1975), 47-48.
- ⁸ CCC, pars. 81, 83; John A. Hardon, *Pocket Catholic Dictionary (PCD)* (New York: Doubleday Image, 1980), 437.
- ⁹ CCC, par. 82.
- ¹⁰ Jude 3; CCC, par. 84; Hardon, *CC*, 41-43.
- ¹¹ See page 58, fn.

- ¹² John Henry Cardinal Newman, “Essay on Inspiration in Its Relation to Revelation,” London, 1884, Essay 1, section 29, in Newman, *On the Inspiration of Scripture*, J. Derek Holmes and Robert Murray, ed. (Washington: Corpus Books, 1967), 131 (emphasis in original).
- ¹³ Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics*, 17, 104-105, 148.
- ¹⁴ See, e.g., Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretations* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1970), 104-106.
- ¹⁵ John Henry Cardinal Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Image, 1955), 296.
- ¹⁶ Sources for New Testament Canon chart (all Protestant): J. D. Douglas, ed., *New Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 196), 194-198; F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 232, 300, 309-310, 626, 641, 724, 1049, 1069; Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *From God to Us: How We Got Our Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), 109-112, 117-125.
- ¹⁷ CCC, pars. 1987-1992; Council of Trent, *Decree on Justification* (January 13, 1547), chs. 7-8. All Trent citations are from *Dogmatic Canons and Decrees (DJ)* (Rockford, Illinois: TAN Books and Publishers, 1977); John A. Hardon, *PCD*, 214-215.
- ¹⁸ CCC, pars. 144-147, 2008-2009; *DJ*, chs. 11, 16; Hardon, *PCD*, 259.
- ¹⁹ CCC, par. 1995; *DJ*, ch. 10, canons 24-26, 31.
- ²⁰ CCC, pars. 1987, 1990, 2000.
- ²¹ CCC, pars. 1265-1266, 1987, 1992, 1997; Hardon, *PCD*, 39.
- ²² CCC, pars. 826, 1127, 1133, 2003, 2030, 2098; Hardon, *PCD*, 393.
- ²³ CCC, par. 2015; Hardon, *PCD*, 380; Hardon, *CC*, 555-559.
- ²⁴ CCC, pars. 1996, 1998-1999, 2001; Hardon, *PCD*, 166.

²⁵ CCC, pars. 2007-2009; Hardon, *PCD*, 259.

²⁶ Commentary on Psalm 83:16. From William A. Jurgens, ed. and trans., *The Faith of the Early Fathers (FEF)* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1970), Vol. 3, 19.

²⁷ CCC, pars. 613-614, 970, 2010-2011; *DJ*, chs. 5-6, canon 33. Previous citation from the Second Council of Orange (canon 18) from Louis Bouyer, *The Spirit and Forms of Protestantism*, A. V. Littledale, trans. (London: Harvill Press, 1956), 68.

²⁸ CCC, pars. 1854-1859, 1861; Hardon, *PCD*, 167, 271.

²⁹ CCC, pars. 1854-1855, 1860, 1862-1863; Hardon, *PCD*, 449.

³⁰ See Augustus H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Westwood, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell, 1967), 849 — a Baptist work; Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Edward N. Gross, ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1988), 458, 461 — a Presbyterian work.

³¹ Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 637-644; Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 296-312. John Calvin sets forth essentially the same teaching in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1559 ed.), Bk. 2, ch. 2, sect. 26-27; ch. 3, sect. 1-7; ch. 4, sect. 1-5. God's greatness and supremacy does not consign man to virtual worthlessness, as in classic Protestantism, but rather, man, created in God's image, is raised to even greater heights by virtue of Christ's Incarnation. For example, 2 Peter 1:4 speaks of human beings' becoming "partakers of the divine nature." The Christian is being redeemed on the earth and (assuming perseverance) is destined for glorification in Heaven.

³² Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 869-871; Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 464-465, 471-472; Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Bk. 3, ch. 16, sect. 1-4; *Augsburg Confession* (Lutheran, 1530), sect. 20.

³³ CCC, pars. 1993, 2001-2002; Hardon, *PCD*, 339; Hardon, *CC*, 80; *DJ*, canons 4-6.

³⁴ CCC, pars. 1033, 1036-1037; Hardon, *PCD*, 175; *DJ*, canon 17.

³⁵ Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 353-370; Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 387-394, 428-431; Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Bk. 3, ch. 21-24. For a scholarly Evangelical exposition of Calvin's predestinarianism, see Alister E. McGrath, *Reformation Thought* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1993), 123-128. Most Protestants today, it must be noted, espouse free will; for example, Lutherans (starting with Philip Melancthon, Luther's successor: see McGrath, *Reformation Thought*, 131), Anglicans, Methodists, many Baptists, and virtually all Pentecostal/Holiness Christians (who derive historically from Methodism), as well as a great many "nondenominational" Evangelical groups. When Protestant denominations reject Calvinism, they are taking a step back in the direction of Catholicism.

³⁶ In 427 St. Augustine wrote a book entitled *Grace and Free Will*, in which he sought to instruct those "who believe that free will is denied, if grace is defended. . . ." (citation from Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, Patrick Lynch, trans. [Rockford, Illinois: TAN Books and Publishers, 1974], 247). Thus, he espoused a view on human free agency that is diametrically opposed to the positions of Luther and Calvin, even though they constantly attempted to cite him as their forerunner. Even the prominent Evangelical apologist Norman Geisler admits that St. Augustine always upheld freedom of the will, denied double predestination, and rejected forensic, or imputed, justification (*Roman Catholics and Evangelicals: Agreements and Differences*, co-author Ralph E. Mac-Kenzie [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1995], 85, 89, 93, 99. In the same book, on page 502, it is conceded that virtually no one taught imputed justification in the whole 1,450-year period from St. Paul to Luther!) St. Augustine's perspective (and that of the Catholic Church) on human free will is that it mysteriously and paradoxically coexists with God's sovereign prevenient grace, which encompasses it within the sphere of his providence. It is one thing to acknowledge inscrutable mysteries, another altogether thereby to deny outright elements such as human free will, because we do not possess full understanding of God's ways.

³⁷ CCC, pars. 30, 74, 605; Hardon, *PCD*, 34. God's desire for and exercise of

Universal Atonement is well-attested in Scripture: John 1:29, 3:15-18, 4:42, 11:51-52; Rom. 5:18; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; 1 Tim. 2:4-6; Heb. 2:9; 1 John 2:2. This was also the unanimous view of the Church Fathers.

³⁸ CCC, par. 2005; *DJ*, chs. 9, 11-14, canon 30.

³⁹ He cites, in addition to Matthew 16:27, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Acts 10:42, James 2:24, and Revelation 22:14.

⁴⁰ Sermon: "Faith and Obedience," 1836. All cited Newman sermons can be found in his *Parochial and Plain Sermons* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987) and come from his Anglican period.

⁴¹ Sermon: "The Christian Ministry," 1835.

⁴² "Kresta in the Afternoon," on WDEO, 990 AM, from Ann Arbor, Michigan, and WCAR, 1090 AM, from metropolitan Detroit, from 3-6 p.m. weekdays.

⁴³ Al Kresta continues his somewhat technical exposition of St. Paul's viewpoint on the Jews and "works of righteousness" as follows:

"Contrary to the pronouncements of popular preachers, first-century Judaism did not believe in salvation by works. They believed that they were God's elect people by grace; lawkeeping was their response to God's grace. Salvation was understood to be granted by God's electing grace, not according to a righteousness based on merit-earning works. But most Protestant scholars since Luther have read Paul as saying that Judaism misunderstood the gracious nature of God's covenant with Moses and perverted it into a system of attaining righteousness by works.

"Wrong! Luther's experience was not Paul's. New Testament scholars, for the most part, now understand 'works of law' not as synonymous with human effort but as the activities by which the Jews maintained their distinct status from the Gentiles. . . .

"For Paul, these boundary-defining features distinguished Israel in the flesh (Rom. 2:28) and encouraged Jews to boast in their national identity (Rom.

3:27-29; Gal. 2:16; 6:13). They were obstructing the extension of God's grace to the nations through Christ. In so doing, they were undermining their very purpose of existence: all the nations were supposed to be blessed by the offspring of Abraham (Gen. 12:3; Deut. 4:6; Isa. 66:20). So when Paul says of the Jews that "they sought to establish their own righteousness" (Rom. 10:3), he doesn't mean that they were trying to earn their salvation through human exertion, but that they arrogated to themselves the authority to set the conditions by which believing Gentiles could be regarded as full members in the new covenant community. They rejected the authoritative apostolic teaching that the Gentiles and Jews constituted one body (Acts 15:1, 24; Gal. 1:7, 2:12, 5:10; Eph. 2-3:13), and they sought to thwart God's inclusion of the Gentiles by insisting that Gentiles first become Jews through circumcision, etc., rather than through faith in Jesus, who is the 'aim' or 'end' of the law (Phil. 3:2; Gal. 5:6, 6:15; 1 Cor. 7:19; Rom. 10:4). They were retrogressive. . . ."

⁴⁴ These observations are taken from unpublished lecture notes entitled "Some Further Thoughts on Justification by Faith Through Grace" (1993) and are used by express permission of the author.

⁴⁵ G. C. Berkouwer, *Faith and Justification* (Studies in Dogmatics), Lewis B. Smedes, trans. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1954), 103-105.

⁴⁶ Hartmann Grisar, *Luther*, E. M. Lamond, trans., Luigi Cappadelta, ed. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1917), Vol. 1, 309.

⁴⁷ Sermon: "Human Responsibility," 1835.

⁴⁸ Sermon: "The New Works of the Gospel," 1840.

⁴⁹ The Second Council of Orange was not an ecumenical, or general council, but is solemnly authoritative for all Catholics due to the confirmation of Pope Boniface II (papal bull *Per Filium Nostrum*, January 25, 531).

⁵⁰ Ibid., Canon 4. See also CCC, pars. 1364, 1367, 1382. The vivid Greek term *anathema*, meaning "accursed," is directed by the Council of Trent primarily toward doctrines, rather than persons, based on the ancient practice in the Church of condemning heretical teachings — a procedure

itself derived biblically from passages such as Galatians 1:8-9 and 1 Corinthians 16:22. There is nothing improper whatsoever in defining correct doctrine and rejecting contrary notions. St. Paul does this constantly. The Catholic Church, however, makes no presumption as to the eternal destiny of any individual whatsoever (not even Luther!). Most emphatically, neither *anathema* nor *excommunication* means “proclaimed damned [by the Church],” as many Protestants mistakenly suppose. The more literal meanings are “out of the Church” (in the sense of divergence from her doctrines) or “out of communion” (with the sacraments and the Christian fellowship of believers). Excommunication is perfectly in accord with Pauline practices and teachings as expounded in, e.g., 1 Corinthians 5:3-5; 2 Thessalonians 3:6; 1 Timothy 1:19-20; 2 Timothy 2:14-19, 4:14-15, as well as our Lord’s express injunction in Matthew 18:15-18.

⁵¹ George Salmon, *The Infallibility of the Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House), 39.

⁵² CCC, par. 94; see also pars. 66, 91-94, 126, 158, 171, 217, 236, 250-251, 711, 892, 1201, 1230, 1610, 2045, 2063, 2421, 2625, 2651, 2667, 2671, 2675, 2678, 2684, 2777; Second Vatican Council: *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*, Nov. 18, 1965, ch. 2, no. 8; Dave Armstrong, *Dialogue on the Legitimacy of Catholic Development of Doctrine, With Reference to Vatican I, Vatican II, and the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, online at <http://ic.net/~erasmus/RAZ372.HTM>.

⁵³ Hardon, *PCD*, 109.

⁵⁴ CCC, par. 66.

⁵⁵ CCC, par. 67.

⁵⁶ St. Augustine, *The City of God*, Bk. 16, ch. 2, no. 1. From Jurgens, *FEF*, Vol. 3, 103.

⁵⁷ *On Psalm 54*, no. 22. From James Cardinal Gibbons, *FEF*, 11.

⁵⁸ C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock*, Walter Hooper, ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1970), 44-47. Originally from “Dogma and the

Universe,” *The Guardian* (March 19, 1943): 96; (March 26, 1943): 104, 107; *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1952), 144.

⁵⁹ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 7-10.

⁶⁰ University of Notre Dame Press, 1989.

⁶¹ Jaroslav Pelikan, *Development of Christian Doctrine: Some Historical Prolegomena* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1969), 3.

⁶² Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, vii-viii. Preface to the 1878 edition.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 170-171.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 181-182.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 199-200, 203.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 203, 205.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 353-354.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶⁹ *Against Heresies*, Bk. 3, ch. 24, no. 1. In Jurgens, *FEF*, Vol. 1, 94.

⁷⁰ *The Veiling of Virgins*, ch. 1, no. 3. In Jurgens, *FEF*, Vol. 1, 137.

⁷¹ In Jurgens, *FEF*, Vol. 3, 263.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 265 (emphasis added).

⁷³ In John Chapin, ed., *The Book of Catholic Quotations* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1956), 271.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*; Gibbons, *The Faith of Our Fathers*, 12.

⁷⁵ Salmon, *The Infallibility of the Church*, 31-35.

⁷⁶ Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 21, 23.

⁷⁷ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, Q. 2, art. 7. In Chapin, *The Book of Catholic Quotations*, 271.

⁷⁸ Ch. 1: On the Real Presence of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist. See also CCC, pars. 1373-1374, 1378-1381; Hardon, *PCD*, 132-133, 360.

⁷⁹ Ch. 3: On the Excellency of the Most Holy Eucharist Over the Rest of the Sacraments. See also CCC, pars. 1377, 1390. This belief is derived largely from 1 Corinthians 11:27: “Whoever, therefore, eats the bread *or* drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body *and* blood of the Lord.” Most New Testament translations include the crucial word *or* (e.g., the New International Version [NIV], the New American Standard Bible [NASB], the New English Bible [NEB], the New King James Version [NKJV], and the Phillips Bible). The KJV is a notable exception, but many Protestant scholars admit that its *and* was a nonliteral, polemical mistranslation.

⁸⁰ Ch. 4: On Transubstantiation. See also CCC, pars. 1375, 1376, 1413; Hardon, *CC*, 161.

⁸¹ See Pope Paul VI’s encyclical *Mysterium Fidei* (On Eucharistic Doctrine and Worship) (Glen Rock, New Jersey: Paulist Press, September 3, 1965), 42.

⁸² Karl Adam, *The Spirit of Catholicism*, Dom Justin McCann, trans. (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Image, 1954), 18.

⁸³ CCC, pars. 1385-1387, 1415. See 1 Corinthians 11:27-29; Vatican II: *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, nos. 9, 11.

⁸⁴ Vatican II: *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, 11; CCC, pars. 1324, 1327.

⁸⁵ CCC: sign of Christian unity: pars. 1322-1323, 1325-1326, 1331, 1348, 1353, 1369-1370, 1396, 1398, 1416; sign of the Church: par. 1329; act of thanksgiving: pars. 1328, 1352, 1358-1361; memorial and sacrifice: pars. 1330, 1333, 1341, 1350, 1356-1357, 1362-1368, 1371-1372, 1382-1383, 1410; central focus of the Liturgy and Mass: pars. 1330, 1343, 1345, 1346, 1407; empowering of the faithful for ministry: par. 1332; symbol of God's faithfulness and provision: pars. 1334, 1335; anticipation of the wedding feast of the Lamb: pars. 1329, 1344, 1402; remembrance of the Last Supper: par. 1347; remembrance of Christ's Passion, Resurrection, and return: pars. 1354, 1403-1404, 1409; the "bread of Heaven": pars. 1355, 1405; adoration and worship of God: pars. 1378, 1379, 1408, 1418; union with Christ: pars. 1391, 1416, 1419; means of grace, cleansing from sin, and spiritual renewal: pars. 1392-1395, 1416; offering for the dead: pars. 1371, 1414.

⁸⁶ John Henry Cardinal Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Image, 1956), 318. Newman's *Apologia* is his religious autobiography.

⁸⁷ James Cardinal Gibbons, *The Faith of Our Fathers*, 237-238.

⁸⁸ See, e.g., Job 19:22; Ps. 27:2; Eccles. 4:5; Isa. 9:20, 49:26; Mic. 3:1-3; Rev. 16:6.

⁸⁹ This historical fact is acknowledged by the reputable Protestant reference work *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, F. C. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, eds. (Oxford University Press, 1983), 475-476, 1221. It is conceded that the Real Presence was universally held from the beginning of the Church. This is also confirmed by the *New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* (J. D. Douglas, ed. [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1978], 244-245), which is openly hostile to transubstantiation, considering it unbiblical, yet honestly admits the well-nigh unanimous acceptance of the Real Presence prior to the Reformation. See also the Protestant scholarly sources: Otto W. Heick, *A History of Christian Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), Vol. 1, 221-222; Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church* (New York: Scribner, 1970), 90-91; Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1974), 492, 500, 507; Jaroslav Pelikan, *The*

Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100600) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 146-147, 166-168, 170, 236-237; J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978), 447; Carl Volz, *Faith and Practice in the Early Church* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1983), 107; Maurice Wiles and Mark Santar, *Documents in Early Christian Thought* (Cambridge University Press, 1975), 173. To read the relevant excerpts, see Dave Armstrong, *History of the Doctrine of the Eucharist: Nine Protestant Scholarly Sources*, online at <http://ic.net/~erasmus/RAZ459.HTM>.

⁹⁰ *Handbuch der Kath. Dogmatik*, Vol. 4, 569.

⁹¹ Bertrand L. Conway, *The Question Box* (New York: Paulist Press, 1929), 248-249, 251.

⁹² See Matt. 26:41; Rom. 7:5-6, 25, 8:1-14; 1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Cor. 7:1; Gal. 3:3, 4:29, 5:13-26; 1 Pet. 3:18, 4:6.

⁹³ Conway, *The Question Box*, 251.

⁹⁴ Gibbons, *The Faith of Our Fathers*, 242-243.

⁹⁵ Ch. 1: On the Institution of the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. See also CCC, pars. 1330, 1333, 1341, 1350, 1356-1357, 1362, 1366, 1368, 1372, 1383, 1410-1411; Hardon, CC, 465-471.

⁹⁶ Ch. 9: Canons on the Sacrifice of the Mass, Canon 3. See also CCC, par. 1363, 1365, 1370-1371, 1414.

⁹⁷ Adam, *The Spirit of Catholicism*, 197.

⁹⁸ *On the Invocation, Veneration, and Relics of Saints and On Sacred Images*. See also Vatican II: *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, ch. 7, sects. 50-51; CCC, pars. 946, 955, 960.

⁹⁹ CCC, pars. 954, 958, 962; Hardon, PCD, 83.

¹⁰⁰ Epistle 109, 1. In Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, 319.

¹⁰¹ CCC, pars. 828, 957; Hardon, *PCD*, 448.

¹⁰² CCC, pars. 956, 2683.

¹⁰³ CCC, pars. 1667-1670, 1677; Hardon, *PCD*, 380.

¹⁰⁴ Hardon, *PCD*, 364. Concerning the Church Fathers' views on relics, renowned Protestant church historian Philip Schaff — no friend at all of these practices — concludes forlornly: "The most and the best of the church teachers of our period, Hilary, the two Gregories, Basil, Chrysostom, Isidore of Pelusium, Theodoret, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, and Leo . . . gave the weight of their countenance to the worship [i.e., veneration] of relics, which thus became an essential constituent of the Greek and Roman Catholic religion. They went quite as far as the Council of Trent" (*History of the Christian Church* [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1976], Vol. 3, ch. 7, sect. 87, 456; emphasis added).

¹⁰⁵ Adam, *The Spirit of Catholicism*, 115-116, 123-125, 246.

¹⁰⁶ See, e.g., D. Guthrie and J. A. Motyer, eds., *The New Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1970), 301; Charles F. Pfeiffer and Everett F. Harrison, eds., *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1962), 292.

¹⁰⁷ Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 231-233.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 234.

¹⁰⁹ *Letter to the Rev. E. B. Pusey, D.D., on His Recent Eirenicon*, London, 1866. In Karl Keating, *Catholicism and Fundamentalism* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 264. St. Justin Martyr's *Apology* was written between 148 and 155.

¹¹⁰ Guthrie, *The New Bible Commentary*, 1289. Concurring in this opinion is Robert Jamieson, Andrew R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1961), 846, 1547.

- ¹¹¹ *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 1556-1557.
- ¹¹² Luke 9:32 says they were sleepy or sleeping; whether they heard Moses and Elijah at all is unclear.
- ¹¹³ C. S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1964), 15-16. Lewis also makes an overt reference to the Communion of Saints in his famous *Screwtape Letters* (New York: Macmillan, 1961), 12. Other notable Protestants who stressed a sense of the “aliveness” of the saints in Heaven and their inclusion in the Body of Christ (excluding their invocation) include John Wesley (*Letter to a Roman Catholic*, Dublin, 1749), and A. W. Tozer (“The Communion of Saints,” in *A Treasury of A. W. Tozer* [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1980], 168-170). The Lutheran creedal *Augsburg Confession* (1530), which was sanctioned by Martin Luther himself, in its Article 21, recommends that “saints should be kept in remembrance so that our faith may be strengthened. . . . Moreover, their good works are to be an example for us” (from John H. Leith, ed., *Creeds of the Churches* [Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1963], 77).
- ¹¹⁴ *Profession of Faith of Michael Palaeologus*, Pt. 2. From J. Neuner and J. Dupuis, eds., *The Christian Faith: Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church* (New York: Alba House, 1990), 18. See also CCC, pars. 1030-1032; Vatican II: *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, ch. 7, sects. 50-51; Hardon, *PCD*, 356-357; Hardon, *CC*, 274-275, 278-280.
- ¹¹⁵ Adam, *The Spirit of Catholicism*, 110-111.
- ¹¹⁶ Sermon: “The Intermediate State,” 1836.
- ¹¹⁷ Homily 25 on Numbers.
- ¹¹⁸ *In Ps. 36*; Sermon 3 on Ps. 118.
- ¹¹⁹ St. Francis de Sales, *The Catholic Controversy (CON)*, Henry B. Mackey, trans. (Rockford, Illinois: TAN Books, 1989), 358.
- ¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

- ¹²¹ Sermon: “Chastisement Amid Mercy,” 1838 (on Mic. 7:8-9).
- ¹²² St. Francis de Sales, *CON*, 359-360.
- ¹²³ *Ibid.*, 373-374.
- ¹²⁴ *The Soul*, 100, 10.
- ¹²⁵ Epistle 4, 2.
- ¹²⁶ Homily 35 on Luke 12.
- ¹²⁷ Commentary on Luke 12.
- ¹²⁸ Commentary on Matthew 5.
- ¹²⁹ St. Francis de Sales, *CON*, 372-373.
- ¹³⁰ *City of God*, Bk. 21, ch. 24.
- ¹³¹ *Dialogues*, 4, 39.
- ¹³² Commentary on Mark 3.
- ¹³³ Homily 66 in Cant.
- ¹³⁴ *City of God*, 12:27.
- ¹³⁵ St. Francis de Sales, *CON*, 374-375.
- ¹³⁶ *Haydock’s Catholic Family Bible and Commentary* (Monrovia, California: Catholic Treasures, 1991), 1376-1377, 1611.
- ¹³⁷ Sermon: “The Intermediate State,” 1836.
- ¹³⁸ Bk. 4, epistle 2.
- ¹³⁹ Commentary on 1 Cor. 3; Sermon 20; Commentary on Ps. 116.
- ¹⁴⁰ Commentary on Amos 4.

¹⁴¹ *Dialogues*, 4, 39.

¹⁴² Sixth homily on Exodus.

¹⁴³ Explanations of the Psalms, 37, 3. From Jurgens, *FEF*, Vol. 3, 17.

¹⁴⁴ St. Francis de Sales, *CON*, 360-362.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 368-369.

¹⁴⁶ *The New Bible Commentary*, 1178. The Lutheran Johannes Bengel (1687-1752) and the Anglican Henry Alford (1810-1871) who were both highly respected expositors, also held that Onesiphorus was dead.

¹⁴⁷ *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 1376.

¹⁴⁸ A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1930), Vol. 4, 615.

¹⁴⁹ Sermon: “Holiness Necessary for Future Blessedness,” 1834.

¹⁵⁰ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 2, ch. 12, sects. 156, 604-606.

¹⁵¹ Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer*, 107-109.

¹⁵² *On the Most Holy Sacrament of Penance and Extreme Unction*, Ch. 8: “On the Necessity and on the Fruit of Satisfaction” (emphasis added). In the same session, the Council produced several Canons on the Most Holy Sacrament of Penance, among which are the following: Canon III: “If anyone saith that those words of the Lord the Savior: ‘Receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained’ (John 20:22 ff.), are not to be understood of the power of forgiving and of retaining sins in the sacrament of Penance, as the Catholic Church has always from the beginning understood them; but wrests them, contrary to the institution of this sacrament, to the power of preaching the Gospel; let him be anathema.”

Canon XII: “If anyone saith that God always remits the whole punishment together with the guilt, and that the satisfaction of penitents is no other than the faith whereby they apprehend that Christ has satisfied for them; let him be anathema.”

Canon XIV: “If anyone saith that the satisfactions by which penitents redeem their sins through Jesus Christ are not a worship of God, but traditions of men, which obscure the doctrine of grace and the true worship of God and the benefit itself of the death of Christ; let him be anathema.”

See also CCC, pars. 1422-1429, 1436, 1446, 1448, 1450, 1470, 1472-1473, 1480, 1496; Hardon, *PCD*, 271, 320, 382, 396; and Hardon, *CC*, 481-500, 555-561.

¹⁵³ Conway, *The Question Box*, 293.

¹⁵⁴ Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, 416, 317, 269.

¹⁵⁵ CCC, pars. 1430-1433, 1439, 1451-1454, 1490, 1492.

¹⁵⁶ CCC, pars. 1455-1457, 1484, 1491, 1493, 1495, 1497, 2490.

¹⁵⁷ CCC, pars. 1449, 1463, 1484, 1495.

¹⁵⁸ CCC, pars. 1441-1442, 1444-1445, 1461-1462, 1465-1467, 1485. G. K. Chesterton, the famous writer and convert to Catholicism, wrote of Confession:

“When people ask me, or indeed anyone else, ‘Why did you join the Church of Rome?’ the first essential answer, if it is partly an elliptical answer, is, ‘To get rid of my sins.’ For there is no other religious system that does really profess to get rid of people’s sins. It is confirmed by the logic, which to many seems startling, by which the Church deduces that sin confessed and adequately repented is actually abolished; and that the sinner does really begin again as if he had never sinned....

“When a Catholic comes from Confession, he does truly, by definition, step out again into that dawn of his own beginning and look with new eyes

across the world. . . . He believes that in that dim corner, and in that brief ritual, God has really remade him in His own image. He is now a new experiment of the Creator. He is as much a new experiment as he was when he was really only five years old. . . .

“The Sacrament of Penance gives a new life, and reconciles a man to all living, but it does not do it as the optimists and the hedonists and the heathen preachers of happiness do it. The gift is given at a price, and is conditioned by a confession. In other words, the name of the price is Truth, which may also be called Reality; but it is facing the reality about oneself. When the process is only applied to other people, it is called Realism” (*Autobiography* [New York: Sheed and Ward, 1936], 340-342).

¹⁵⁹ CCC, pars. 1460, 1494.

¹⁶⁰ CCC, pars. 1032, 1434-1435, 1437-1438, 1459.

¹⁶¹ CCC, pars. 1458, 1464, 1493.

¹⁶² CCC, pars. 1471, 1498; Hardon, *CC*, 560-570; Hardon, *PCD*, 193-194; Council of Trent, Session 25 (December 3-4, 1563), *Decree Concerning Indulgences*.

¹⁶³ CCC, pars. 1474-1475, 1479.

¹⁶⁴ CCC, pars. 1476-1477.

¹⁶⁵ CCC, par. 1478.

¹⁶⁶ In *The Question Box* (pp. 296-297), Bertrand Conway writes of the controversial history of indulgences:

“Catholic historians . . . have frequently mentioned the abuses connected with the preaching of Indulgences in the Middle Ages. The medieval pardoner . . . was often an unscrupulous rascal, whose dishonesty and fraud were condemned by the Bishops of the time. We find orders for their arrest in Germany at the Council of Mainz in 1261, and in England by order of the Bishop of Durham in 1340. To indict the Church for these abuses . . . is

manifestly dishonest. . . .

“It is comparatively easy today to get monies for any charitable enterprise, for we can appeal to thousands by letter, post, radio, or the daily press. In the Middle Ages, when men wished to build a church or support a worthy charity, the Bishop or Pope granted an Indulgence, which first of all called upon the people to approach the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist, and then ‘to lend a helping hand’ in some special work of charity. The Council of Trent, following the Councils of Fourth Lateran [1215], Lyons [1245 and 1274], and Vienne [1311-1312], condemned in express terms ‘the wicked abuse of quaestors of alms,’ and, because of the great scandal they had given, ‘abolished their name and use’ (Session 24).

“While Catholics believe that the building of St. Peter’s in Rome was a matter of interest to the whole Catholic world, they heartily condemn with Grisar and Janssen [Catholic historians] the manner of financing the Indulgence, and the exaggerations of the preachers in extolling unduly its effects and privileges.

“No one believes today the calumnies against Tetzel’s character. Luther did not speak the truth when he asserted that ‘Tetzel sold grace for money at the highest price.’ As both Pastor and Grisar point out, we must carefully distinguish between Tetzel’s teaching with regard to Indulgences for the living, and Indulgences applicable to the dead. With regard to Indulgences for the living, his teaching, as we know from his *Vorlegung* and his *Frankfort Theses*, was perfectly Catholic. . . .

“ ‘As regards Indulgences for the dead,’ Pastor writes, ‘there is no doubt that Tetzel did, according to what he considered his authoritative instructions, proclaim as Christian doctrine that nothing but an offering of money was required to gain the Indulgence for the dead, without there being any question of contrition or confession. He also taught, in accordance with an opinion then held, that an Indulgence could be applied to any given soul with unfailing effect. . . . The Papal Bull of Indulgence gave no sanction whatever to this proposition. It was a vague scholastic opinion, rejected by the Sorbonne in 1482, and again in 1518, and certainly not a doctrine of the Church’ (*History of the Popes*, Vol. 7, 349). Cardinal Cajetan at the time condemned Tetzel’s opinion, and taught that ‘while we may presume

in a general way that God is willing to accept Indulgences for the dead, we have no certainty whatever that He does so in any particular case. That is the secret of God alone.’ In 1477 Pope Sixtus IV had expressly taught that the Church applies Indulgences for the dead ‘by way of suffrage,’ for the souls in Purgatory are no longer subject to her jurisdiction. They receive Indulgences not directly, but indirectly, through the intercession of the living.”

¹⁶⁷ Pope Paul VI, *Apostolic Constitution on the Revision of Indulgences* (1967).

¹⁶⁸ CCC, pars. 980, 1440, 1443-1445, 1469, 1488.

¹⁶⁹ CCC, pars. 980, 1440, 1468.

¹⁷⁰ Dom Bernard Orchard, ed. (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1953), 1135.

¹⁷¹ Adam, *The Spirit of Catholicism*, 127-128.

¹⁷² Gibbons, *The Faith of Our Fathers*, 308-309.

¹⁷³ *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 762.

¹⁷⁴ Adam, *The Spirit of Catholicism*, 113-114.

¹⁷⁵ Nicholas Russo, *The True Religion* (New York: P. J. Kenedy and Sons, 1886), 270-271.

¹⁷⁶ Fulton Sheen, *The World’s First Love* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1952), 5, 8, 11-12. C. S. Lewis also makes a noteworthy observation about different perspectives on Mary in his masterpiece of basic Christian apologetics, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1952), 7-8.

¹⁷⁷ Sheen, *The World’s First Love*, 51, 58-59, 61, 63.

¹⁷⁸ Second Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, ch. 8, “Our Lady,” IV, 67.

- ¹⁷⁹ Pope Paul VI, *Apostolic Exhortation Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary* (Washington: U.S. Catholic Conference, February 2, 1974), 24.
- ¹⁸⁰ From Neuner and Dupuis, *The Christian Faith*, 160-161. See also CCC, pars. 484-486, 494-495, 509, 721, 963, 972, 975; Hardon, *PCD*, 272-273, 432-433; Hardon, *CC*, 132-138.
- ¹⁸¹ Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, 196-197.
- ¹⁸² Gibbons, *The Faith of Our Fathers*, 137-138.
- ¹⁸³ *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, Pt. 1, ch. 4, sect. 2, no. 10. The Lutheran scholar Jaroslav Pelikan concurs completely (*The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971], 241-242). Virtually all of the original Protestant Reformers (e.g., Luther, Calvin, Zwingli) used this title as well, with the same understanding.
- ¹⁸⁴ See CCC, pars. 411, 490-494, 508, 721-722, 966; Hardon, *CC*, 150-160; Hardon, *PCD*, 187-188.
- ¹⁸⁵ Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, 200.
- ¹⁸⁶ W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell, 1940), Vol. 2, 84.
- ¹⁸⁷ Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. 2, 13.
- ¹⁸⁸ Blass and DeBrunner, *Greek Grammar of the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 166; H. W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), sect. 1852:b.
- ¹⁸⁹ Gibbons, *The Faith of Our Fathers*, 135-137.
- ¹⁹⁰ CCC, pars. 488, 490, 494, 511, 967, 973.
- ¹⁹¹ CCC, pars. 411, 493-494, 508, 721.
- ¹⁹² CCC, pars. 487, 492, 722, 964, 970.

¹⁹³ CCC, par. 971.

¹⁹⁴ John Henry Cardinal Newman, *Meditations and Devotions* (Harrison, New York: Roman Catholic Books, n.d.), 151-152, 155-156.

¹⁹⁵ William Ullathorne, *The Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God* (Westminster, Maryland: Christian Classics, 1988), 67, 32-33.

¹⁹⁶ CCC, pars. 966, 974; Hardon, *CC*, 154-155, 160-163; Hardon, *PCD*, 32.

¹⁹⁷ Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, 208-209. For the “New Eve” typology, see CCC, pars. 411, 494, 511, 726, 975.

¹⁹⁸ Letter of September 10, 1869, in Alberic Stacpoole, ed., *Mary’s Place in Christian Dialogue* (Wilton, Connecticut: Morehouse-Barlow, 1982), 240.

¹⁹⁹ Sermon for the Assumption (1849), in *Discourses to Mixed Congregations*, 1849, 371-373, in Stacpoole, *Mary’s Place in Christian Dialogue*, 240-241.

²⁰⁰ Sheen, *The World’s First Love*, 118-119, 121.

²⁰¹ In Neuner and Dupuis, *The Christian Faith*, 217. See CCC, pars. 484-486, 496-498, 502-506, 510, 723 (for the virgin birth); pars. 499-501, 507, 510, 721 (for the perpetual virginity of Mary).

²⁰² Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, Vol. 1, 154-155.

²⁰³ *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 928 (emphasis added).

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 882 (first emphasis added). Romans 8:22, 1 Timothy 4:13, 6:14, and Revelation 2:25 furnish four further examples of a similar meaning of *until*.

²⁰⁵ CCC, pars. 501, 507, 963, 968-970, 972-973, 975.

²⁰⁶ CCC, pars. 507, 722, 967.

²⁰⁷ John Henry Newman, “Letter to Pusey,” in *Difficulties of Anglicans*, Vol. 2, 1875.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ CCC, pars. 489, 722.

²¹⁰ Ott, *Fundamentals of Christian Dogma*, 212-213.

²¹¹ CCC, pars. 964-965, 968-970, 975.

²¹² *On the Councils and the Church* (1539). From Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann, eds., *Luther’s Works* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House [Vols. 1-30], Philadelphia: Fortress Press [Vols. 31-55], 1955), Vol. 41, 99-100.

²¹³ William J. Cole, “Was Luther a Devotee of Mary?” *Marian Studies*, Vol. 21, 1970: 131 (Sermon, September 1, 1522).

²¹⁴ Ibid. (Christmas sermon, 1531).

²¹⁵ “Sermons on John, chs. 1-4” (1537-1539). In Pelikan, *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 22, 23.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 214-215. Pelikan asserts that this was Luther’s lifelong belief.

²¹⁷ Sermon: “On the Day of the Conception of Mary, the Mother of God” (December 1527). From Grisar, Hartmann, *Luther*, trans., E. M. Lamond, ed. Luigi Cappadelta (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, and Co., 1917), Vol. 4, 238 (emphasis added). See also, e.g., House Sermon for Christmas, 1533.

²¹⁸ Cole, “Was Luther a Devotee of Mary?” 185; *Little Prayer Book* (1522).

²¹⁹ “Mary’s Place within the People of God According to Non-Roman Catholics,” *Marian Studies*, Vol. 18, 1967: 46-83 (see page 76).

²²⁰ Cole, “Was Luther a Devotee of Mary?” 123-124.

- ²²¹ Ibid., 128 (Sermon, Christmas, 1529; emphasis added).
- ²²² *Little Prayer Book* (1522). In Pelikan, *Luther's Works*, Vol. 43, 39-41.
- ²²³ "Magnificat" (1521). In Pelikan, *Luther's Works*, Vol. 21, 327 (emphasis added).
- ²²⁴ Commentary on Luke 1:42, 45. In Max Thurian, *Mary: Mother of All Christians*, Neville B. Cryer, trans. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963), 186.
- ²²⁵ Ross MacKenzie, "Mariology as an Ecumenical Problem," *Marian Studies*, Vol. 26, 1975: 206-207 (*Harmony of Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, sect. 39 [Geneva, 1562]).
- ²²⁶ Letter to French community in London, Sept. 27, 1552. In Thurian, *Mary: Mother of All Christians*, 77.
- ²²⁷ Calvin, *Harmony*, Vol. 2. From *Calvin's Commentaries*, William Pringle, trans. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1949), 215; on Matthew 13:55.
- ²²⁸ *Calvin's Commentaries*, Vol. 1, 107. Calvin, in his commentary on Luke 1:34 in his *Harmony*, affirms the perpetual virginity of Mary, while at the same time denying that Mary had made a vow of celibacy.
- ²²⁹ From Thurian, *Mary: Mother of All Christians*, 197-198; written in 1568, *De Origine Erroris*, 16.
- ²³⁰ In *Dogmatic Canons and Decrees* (Rockford, Illinois: TAN Books, 1977), 256. (Documents of Councils of Trent and Vatican I, plus Decree on the Immaculate Conception and the *Syllabus of Errors* of Pope Pius IX). See also CCC, pars. 891, 2035; Hardon, CC, 224-233; Hardon PCD, 194-195. For conciliar infallibility, see CCC, pars. 891-892, 2035.
- ²³¹ CCC, pars. 552-553, 765, 862, 880-882, 936-937, 1444.
- ²³² St. Francis de Sales, CON, 306-307.

- ²³³ Robert Hugh Benson, *The Religion of the Plain Man* (Long Prairie, Minnesota: Neumann Press, 1906), 109.
- ²³⁴ John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, Pt. 1, ch. 4, sect. 3, nos. 4-5, 7-8. Newman was received into the Catholic Church the year this book of his was completed.
- ²³⁵ Gibbons, *The Faith of Our Fathers*, 108-109.
- ²³⁶ CCC, pars. 877, 879, 887.
- ²³⁷ CCC, par. 889.
- ²³⁸ CCC, pars. 765, 816, 880-881, 883-885, 895, 1444, 2034.
- ²³⁹ CCC, pars. 77, 551, 833, 860-862, 869, 875, 886, 888, 890, 892, 894-896, 935, 938.
- ²⁴⁰ In Vincent Gasser, *The Gift of Infallibility*, James T. O'Connor, trans. (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1986), 41-44.
- ²⁴¹ Ronald Knox, *In Soft Garments* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Image, 1941), 130.
- ²⁴² *Micropedia*, 330-333. D. W. O'Connor, the author of the article, is himself Protestant and author of *Peter in Rome: The Literary, Liturgical, and Archaeological Evidence* (1969).
- ²⁴³ Oscar Cullmann, *Peter: Disciple, Apostle, Martyr* (second revised edition, 1962).
- ²⁴⁴ Anchor Bible (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1971), Vol. 26, 195, 197-198.
- ²⁴⁵ In Peter J. McCord, ed., *A Pope For All Christians?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1976), 7. This book is an ecumenical project, offering views on the papacy from many perspectives. Brown is a Presbyterian and a prominent ecumenist.

- ²⁴⁶ Leon Morris, gen. ed., *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press/Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1985), Vol. 1: *Matthew*, R. T. France, 254, 256.
- ²⁴⁷ Frank E. Gaebelin, gen. ed., *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1984), Vol. 8: *Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Matthew: D. A. Carson), 368.
- ²⁴⁸ Second revised edition (London: Nelson, 1962), 787.
- ²⁴⁹ According to Raymond E. Brown, Karl P. Donfried, and John Reumann, eds., *Peter in the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House/New York: Paulist Press, 1973), 92-93, which also takes the same view. This is probably the most important ecumenical work on Peter and is thus cited first in a long bibliography in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. It is a common statement by a panel of eleven Catholic and Lutheran scholars.
- ²⁵⁰ Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1946), Vol. 1, 91-92; emphasis in original.
- ²⁵¹ St. Francis de Sales, *CON*, 242-243, 245-247.
- ²⁵² G. K. Chesterton, *Heretics* (London: The Bodley Head, 1950), 60-61. Chesterton was not yet formally Catholic at the time of this quote (1905). He would be received into the Catholic Church seventeen years later, in 1922.
- ²⁵³ J. D. Douglas, ed., *The New Bible Dictionary (NBD)* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1962), 1018.
- ²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 1018, 1216; Guthrie, *NBC*, 603, 837; France, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, 256; Cullmann, *Peter: Disciple, Apostle, Martyr*, 183-184 (in 1952 French edition). Cullmann describes Peter as Jesus' "superintendent." The ecumenical work *Peter in the New Testament* (Brown, ed.) also espouses the same view (96-97).
- ²⁵⁵ See Stanley Jaki, *The Keys of the Kingdom* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald

Press, 1986), 27-28.

²⁵⁶ *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 536.

²⁵⁷ See, e.g., Allen C. Myers, ed., *Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1987), 158; Guthrie, NBC, 837; France, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, 256.

²⁵⁸ Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, Vol. 1, 96.

²⁵⁹ Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, Vol. 2, 88.

²⁶⁰ Russo, *The True Religion*, 124-126.

²⁶¹ St. Francis de Sales, *CON*, 258-259.

²⁶² Conway, *The Question Box*, 152-153 (emphasis added).

²⁶³ Leslie Rumble, and Charles M. Carty, *Radio Replies* (St. Paul, Minnesota: Radio Replies Press, 1940), Vol. 1, 82-83, question 357.

²⁶⁴ Douglas, *NBD*, 973.

²⁶⁵ Conway, *The Question Box*, 152.

²⁶⁶ Rumble and Carty, *Radio Replies*, Vol. 2, 91, question 344.

²⁶⁷ This number includes thirteen generally accepted instances of St. John's humble referral to himself as "the disciple," or, "the disciple whom Jesus loved" in John 18-21. We know this from John 21:24, John's style, and deductive logic. Also included are five occurrences in Revelation, assuming the same John is its author (which is questioned by many biblical scholars).

²⁶⁸ Fulton J. Sheen, *Life of Christ* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Image, 1958), 106. Sheen's figures for Peter and John were 195 and twenty-nine. I used my own tallies from *Strong's Concordance*.

²⁶⁹ *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, 1520, from the translation of A.

T. W. Steinhauser (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), 197.

²⁷⁰ Martin Luther, *Large Catechism* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1935), sects. 223-224, 230, 162, 165.

²⁷¹ From *The Book of Common Prayer* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1979), 873.

²⁷² TULIP is an acronym for the basic ideas of Calvinism: total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints.

²⁷³ Eusebius, *History of the Church*, G. A. Williamson, trans. (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1965), 31.

²⁷⁴ New English Bible (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), iii.

²⁷⁵ See Rev. 1:8, 11. Actual experience of the author, formerly a “nondenominational,” charismatic Evangelical Protestant.

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KARL KEATING

Catholicism

AND

FUNDAMENTALISM



The Attack
ON “ROMANISM”

BY

“BIBLE CHRISTIANS”

IGNATIUS

Catholicism and Fundamentalism

The Attack on “Romanism”

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Karl Keating

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Do not be afraid, speak out, and refuse to be silenced; I am with thee, and none shall come near to do thee harm; I have a great following in this city.

(Acts 18:9-10)

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Preface

Few orthodox Catholics can imagine themselves leaving their religion for another. If, in the disorientation that comes between sleep and wakefulness, they imagine changing their spiritual allegiance, they see themselves waving a fond farewell to Rome (“Well, it was almost what we were looking for”) and walking but a short distance to something Romelike.

They may see themselves turning to Eastern Orthodoxy, perceived as a haven from modern religious travails, or to Anglo-Catholicism, still a lure for the romantic and for readers of Pusey, Keble, and the early Newman. Or they may see themselves withdrawing from the active practice of religion, remaining “culturally Catholic,” honoring the faith of their upbringing in the breach and the perhaps twice-yearly observance (to placate spouse and children). To convert to mainline Protestantism, or to collapse into agnosticism, does not occur to them even in nightmares, and outright atheism is for crackpots and sour old men. They can contemplate only a slight shift—that, or a life of undistinguished lapsarianism.

What few practicing Catholics can imagine is that they might chuck Catholicism for something like fundamentalism, to which they are not drawn at all. Still, they know that people of their acquaintance, people from their own parishes, have made the transition, and are seemingly none the worse for wear. These former Catholics function the same way on the job, cavort with their children at the same parks, and shop at the same malls. They seem largely unchanged by their newfound faith.

Despite that, their conversion is taken as a betrayal because it is a denial. A change to Eastern Orthodoxy or Anglo-Catholicism is more an adjustment than a real switch; even becoming a lapsed Catholic makes sense, since it is a matter of letting spiritual indolence take control. But fundamentalism? To embrace it is to reject Catholicism outright, because fundamentalism does not just modify, but discards, the sacramental and liturgical core of Catholicism. One might as well subscribe to an obscure Eastern cult. To most Catholics, that would be just as sensible.

This lack of sympathy with the bare possibility of conversion to

fundamentalism may be one reason the fundamentalist problem is misunderstood by Catholics. After all, it is hard to understand something that is not taken seriously. But the allure of fundamentalism *should* be taken seriously, if for no other reason than that hundreds of thousands of Catholics have taken it so seriously in the last few years that they have joined “Bible-believing” churches. Many of them have become not just non-Catholics, but anti-Catholics, because such an attitude is the natural result of the logic of their position. They perceive a duty to bring into “real Christianity” the family and friends they left at Mass, and bring them in they have. In this they have not been left to their own devices. Hundreds of organizations and thousands of individuals work to introduce Catholics to fundamentalism, and each year they distribute millions of books, tracts, and recordings. They have been remarkably successful, and their techniques and arguments are worth examining.

First, though, a few words about what not to expect. What follows will be no thorough review of fundamentalism as a whole and still less of Protestantism. The focus is on that part of fundamentalism actively engaged in anti-Catholic work and on the issues brought up in that work. Just as fundamentalists form a subset of all Protestants, so actively anti-Catholic fundamentalists are a subset of all fundamentalists. It is the tireless workers in the anti-Catholic fields who are profiled here, and even then there is room to consider only representatives of the movement and only some of their charges.

Do not expect this book to discuss what it is not meant to discuss. (There is little more frustrating for a writer than to be accused of badly handling a topic he had no intention of discussing anyway.) The focus is on those fundamentalists, whether blessed with notoriety or with anonymity, who try to convince Catholics to forsake Rome and on the arguments they make against Catholicism. Many of the best-known fundamentalists do not fall within this purview because they act irenically, making common cause with Catholics on social and political matters and never using terms such as “papist”, or “Romish”, or “Jesuitical”—terms that are giveaways for active anti-Catholics.

Keep in mind that when we try to locate fundamentalism on the religious spectrum, we run into all sorts of terminological confusions. What popularly goes by the name may be considered one wing of evangelicalism. In fact, the theology attributed to fundamentalists in this book can be attributed to many

self-described evangelicals who are put off by fundamentalism's reaction to the Catholic Church. It is easy to find people who call themselves evangelicals, who disdain fundamentalists, who are reasonably friendly with Catholics (even allowing us the title Christian), yet whose theological beliefs are indistinguishable from those of strict fundamentalists. Millions who shun the label are theologically fundamentalists.

For convenience—or out of discomfort in being bracketed with people who get a bad press—they choose a looser label. And loose it is. Evangelicalism is a spectrum. At one end it merges, even coincides, with strict fundamentalism; at the other it fades into mainline Protestantism, which is to say, religious liberalism. It is a matter of convenience that the term fundamentalist is used in these pages. There appears to be no adequate alternative. “Evangelical” is too broad; “conservative evangelical” is too awkward; “Bible Christian” implies that no other Christians base their faith on the Bible.

In covering anti-Catholic activity among fundamentalists, a writer cannot please everyone, Catholic or fundamentalist. Sometimes he cannot please anyone. Each reader will lament that something was left out, something was given too much attention, or something was given the wrong emphasis. “Why did he skip *the* one important point?” people will ask. “Why is *this* group omitted?”

The United States boasts (if that is the proper word) hundreds of anti-Catholic organizations. Only a few can be profiled here. Little-known organizations headed by little-known anti-Catholics have been given as much space as their well-known counterparts because most anti-Catholic groups are small, though their cumulative effect is large. Even then, it is not so much the groups that are examined as their arguments. The selection of arguments has not been entirely arbitrary, although it may appear so to the reader unable to find a consideration of the one that most interests him. Opponents of “Romanism” throw countless accusations against the Church. There is hardly space to list them all, let alone space to refute them. Far better, surely, to look at a sampling, stating the anti-Catholics' positions, so far as possible, in their own words and leaving room for what are intended to be adequate, although not complete, Catholic rejoinders.

The first part of this book deals with “professional anti-Catholics”, fundamentalists who earn their livelihoods by attacking the “Whore of Babylon”. In the second part representative issues are dissected. The final chapters give advice in practical apologetics (what to do, what not to do) and

in the intellectual preparation necessary for fruitful apologetics work.

Chapter 1

Background to Controversy

The story of fundamentalism may be viewed in three main phases.¹ The first lasted a generation, from the 1890s to the Scopes Trial of 1925. Fundamentalism emerged as a reaction to liberalizing trends in American Protestantism. Under a separatist impulse and influenced by millennialism and dispensationalism,² it broke off, but never completely, from evangelicalism, of which it may be considered one wing. In its second phase, after what many considered a crushing defeat at Dayton, Tennessee, it passed from view but never disappeared and never even lost ground. Finally, fundamentalism came to the nation's attention again a generation ago, and it has enjoyed remarkable growth since.

Not counting quasi-Christian sects such as the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, fundamentalism has experienced the greatest growth, in percentage terms, of any type of Christianity. Converts have included the previously unchurched and dropouts from other denominations. What has been surprising is that Catholics comprise a disproportionate share of the new recruits. The Catholic Church in America claims about a quarter of the country's inhabitants, so one might expect about a quarter of the converts to fundamentalism to have been Catholics at one time. Indeed, a reasonable expectation might be for an even smaller share, since people already in a church tend to remain through inertia, while the unchurched have fewer ties to keep them from conversion. Yet in many fundamentalist congregations a third, a half, or even a majority of the members once gave allegiance to Rome.³ This varies around the country, of course.

Fundamentalist churches in the South claim few converts from Catholicism because there never have been many Catholics there anyway. In parts of the Northeast and Midwest, where Catholics are more numerous, one finds former Catholics making up a majority of some fundamentalist congregations. In the Southwest, with a high Hispanic population, whole congregations consist of former Catholics. As many as one out of six

Hispanics in this country is now a fundamentalist. So great and so rapid has the exodus been that only twenty years ago one could find almost no Hispanic fundamentalists.

Although present-day fundamentalism is mainly American⁴ and is, as a movement within or alongside evangelicalism, rather new, many of its leaders speak as though it has been a well-formed, if often hidden, whole since the days of Christ. At the least, many people, both inside and outside fundamentalism, think it is unalloyed Reformation religion. This impression is bolstered by professional anti-Catholics, who speak and write like the Reformers they admire. They have steeped themselves in Calvin's *Institutes* or Luther's *Works*, and they use the diction of the sixteenth century. Writings of their opponents are called "epistles of straw" (Luther's label for the Epistle of James). They throw around the term "Antichrist" with abandon, as though it were a talisman. Whatever they dislike is "blasphemous", even if the matter at hand has nothing to do with blasphemy. And the histrionics of their pulpit orations give unhappy credence to stereotypes. (Yes, some fundamentalist preachers really do thump Bibles.)

Despite such appearances, fundamentalism's connection to the Reformation is not as clear as nonfundamentalists might think or as fundamentalists might hope. The direct historical link is not only obscure, but nearly absent. In recent years fundamentalism has received a considerable press, and people realize it is resurgent, but many also think it has been around for centuries and has only recently achieved notoriety. Not so.

True, there long have been people who have been, say, strict Calvinists, and fundamentalism is nothing if not Calvinistic. Yet until a lifetime ago fundamentalism as we know it was not a separate movement within Protestantism, and the word itself was unknown. People who today would be called fundamentalists were then just Baptists or Presbyterians or whatever; they did not perceive themselves as belonging to a religious faction within Protestantism, a faction that transcended denominational lines. In the last decade of the nineteenth century there arose issues that made them start to withdraw from mainline Protestantism, so that today, while their descendants may still be Baptists or Presbyterians or whatever, they are first fundamentalists, even if they shy away from that term and adopt one that has not been so abused by the secular media.

The issues that first divided fundamentalism from the remainder of Protestantism were the Social Gospel, a liberalizing and secularizing trend

within Protestantism; the embrace of Darwinism, which seemed to call into question the reliability of Scripture; and the higher criticism of the Bible that came out of Germany. New thinkers attempted to synthesize secularism and Christianity and did so by giving up Christianity, or so the conservatives thought. In reaction to these trends early fundamentalist leaders united around several basic principles, but it was not until the publication of the series of twelve volumes called *The Fundamentals*⁵ that the movement received its name.

The basic elements of fundamentalism were formulated almost exactly a century ago at the Princeton Theological Seminary in Princeton, New Jersey, by Benjamin B. Warfield, Charles Hodge, and their associates.⁶ What they produced became known as Princeton theology, and it appealed to conservative Protestants who were concerned with the Social Gospel movement.

Between 1909 and 1915 the brothers Milton and Lyman Stewart, whose wealth came from oil, underwrote *The Fundamentals*, a series of twelve paperback books. The preface to the volumes explained their purpose: “In 1909 God moved two Christian laymen to set aside a large sum of money [\$300,000] for issuing twelve volumes that would set forth the fundamentals of the Christian faith, and which were to be sent free to ministers of the gospel, missionaries, Sunday school superintendents, and others engaged in aggressive Christian work throughout the English-speaking world.” Three million copies were distributed. Each volume contained seven or eight essays. Aside from studies of strictly doctrinal matters, there were attacks on modern biblical criticism, critiques of scientific theories, personal testimonies, commentaries on missionary work and evangelization, and accounts of heresies. The last category included essays on “Catholicism: Is It Christian?” and “Rome, the Antagonist of the Nation”.⁷

There were sixty-four contributors, including scholars such as C. I. Scofield, compiler of the *Scofield Reference Bible*; “W. J. Eerdman and his son, Charles; H. C. G. Motile, Anglican bishop of Durham; James M. Gray, dean of the Moody Bible Institute; and Warfield himself. They included Presbyterian ministers, Methodist evangelists, editors of religious periodicals, professors, even an Egyptologist.⁸ As Edward Dobson, an associate pastor at Jerry Falwell’s Thomas Road Baptist Church, put it, “They were certainly not anti-intellectual, snakehandling, cultic, obscurantist fanatics.”⁹

The fundamentals identified in the series have been tallied variously, some

listing as many as fourteen points. Most commentators agree on at least these five: (1) the inspiration and infallibility of Scripture; (2) the deity of Christ, including his Virgin Birth; (3) the substitutionary atonement of his death; (4) his literal resurrection from the dead; and (5) his literal return in the Second Coming. Dobson writes, “Although some have expanded this list to include such issues as a literal heaven and hell, soulwinning, a personal Satan, and the local church, nevertheless the doctrinal character of fundamentalism still centers around the five fundamentals listed.”¹⁰

The books were noticed by many who were unsympathetic to the views expressed in them. On May 22, 1922, Harry Emerson Fosdick, himself a theological liberal, preached on the subject “Shall the Fundamentalists Win?” He used the title of the books to designate the people he was opposing, and the label stuck. He was not, though, the coiner of the word. That honor goes to Curtis Lee Law, who, in an editorial for the *New York Watchman-Examiner* of July 1, 1920, defined “fundamentalists” as those “who mean to do battle for the fundamentals”.¹¹

This at least explains how the name of the movement came into being. The movement itself has a more confused origin. It had no one founder, nor was there a single event that precipitated its advent. Fundamentalist writers—especially those who write against the Catholic Church—insist that fundamentalism is nothing but a continuation of Christian orthodoxy, which prevailed for three centuries after Christ, went underground for twelve hundred years, surfaced with the Reformation, took its knocks from various sources, and was alternately influential and diminished in visibility. According to its partisans, fundamentalism is what remains after the rest of Christianity, if it can be granted the title, has fallen into apostasy.

The real history of fundamentalism is more prosaic. It is mainly an American phenomenon influenced by British evangelicalism, and it would be difficult to trace its antecedents beyond the Great Awakening of the 1720s, by the end of which, two decades later, perhaps a third of the adults in the Colonies had undergone a religious conversion. The Great Awakening might be credited with making the larger number of Americans consciously religious, and a widely spread religious sense meant a fertile ground for what would come to be called fundamentalism.

Most commentators look to the nineteenth century for fundamentalism’s origin. That century saw the steady dividing of American Protestantism, as first one disaffected group split from its denomination, then another. For

example, the Methodist revival of 1866, held on the centenary of the establishment of Methodism in America, culminated in the Holiness Camp Meeting of Vineland, New Jersey, a year later, and *that* culminated in schism, with the Holiness Churches splitting off from Methodism, which itself had split off from Anglicanism.

It was the nineteenth century that saw the rise of millennialism and dispensationalism, closely allied beliefs. The former refers to the literal thousand-year reign of Christ on earth (see Rev 20) and is usually accompanied by a propensity for interpreting scriptural prophecies as referring to present or imminent historical events—in recent years, the Cold War and the status of Israel. The varieties of millennialism are numerous, there being no party line on the matter among fundamentalists. There is little agreement about when the Second Coming will occur—will it be before or after the millennium?—and less agreement on how to understand what many acknowledge to be predictions about the immediate future. A century ago, millennialism was chiefly known for the frequency with which its proponents gave precise, but unfailingly wrong, dates for the end of the world. Millennialists are more circumspect today.

Dispensationalism was a theory developed by John Nelson Darby (1800—1882), founder of the Plymouth Brethren. Darby divided history into dispensations, or eras, in which God dwells in different ways with different people. Dispensationalists distinguished between Israel and the Church—one God’s earthly people, the other his heavenly people. The distinctive phrase of their movement was “dividing the word of truth”. This referred to deciding which parts of the Bible refer to Israel and which to the Church.

The present era was considered the “time of the Gentiles”, in which Israel suffers as it awaits the fulfillment of biblical prophecies. These prophecies are to be fulfilled beginning at the Rapture, when the “saints” will be taken alive to heaven. The Rapture immediately precedes the Tribulation, which cleanses the world in anticipation of Christ’s reign. Darby’s writings influenced C. I. Scofield, and today many fundamentalists receive their instruction in dispensationalism from *The Scofield Reference Bible*.

Neither millennialism nor dispensationalism figures much in disputes between Catholics and fundamentalists, although many of the latter, along with many evangelicals, are preoccupied with such notions, as evidenced by the popularity of books such as Hal Lindsey’s *Late Great Planet Earth*. Complaints about Catholicism seldom refer to peculiarly fundamentalist or

evangelical doctrines; the focus is almost always on peculiarly Catholic doctrines. For their part, Catholics take little interest in millennialism, although it intrigued their ancestors at the turn of the eleventh century, and even less in dispensationalism, which has never intrigued any of them.

Fundamentalists regard the Bible as the keystone of their faith. Their understanding of inspiration and inerrancy comes from Benjamin Warfield's notion of plenary-verbal inspiration, meaning that in the autographs all of the Bible is inspired and the inspiration extends not just to the message God wished to convey, but to the very words chosen by the sacred writers. For many fundamentalists, particularly those not of an intellectual bent, this reduces to the dictation theory of inspiration—the human authors were mere stenographers, their only task being to record what the Voice said. This, of course, implies not only a Bible free from error, which is also the orthodox Catholic position, but also a Bible free from ambiguity and, often, symbolism, one in which the words are taken in *the* plainest sense, which often means the sense they would have if taken out of context. (An exception is John 6, where the Eucharist is promised. This chapter is never taken literally by fundamentalists, but is by Catholics.)

The key problem with fundamentalists' understanding of the Bible is that they have no rational grounds for what they believe. That sounds harsh, but it is true, and fundamentalists admit it. As E. J. Young says, "If the Bible is not a trustworthy witness of its own character, we have no assurance that our Christian faith is founded upon Truth." He argues that refusing to make the Bible alone normative is to embrace "results which are hostile to supernatural Christianity".¹² The Bible must be accepted as the sole rule of faith because any other position leads to the abandonment of Christianity, and that, as Churchill might say, *is something* up with which we will not put. We believe the Bible to be true, say fundamentalists, because to adopt any other position is to deny the truths in which we otherwise believe. It is not hard to see that this position has seldom appealed to the intellectually demanding, since the implication is that it would be salutary to accept even a wrong understanding of the Bible so long as basic Christian truths, whatever one thinks they might be, are protected.

Although the doctrines of the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible come first to the tongue of most fundamentalists, the logically prior doctrine is the deity of Christ. For the Catholic, his deity is accepted either on the word of the authoritative and infallible Church or because a dispassionate

examination of the Bible and early Christian history shows that he must have been just what he claimed to be, God. Most Catholics, as a practical matter, use the first method; many—the apologist Arnold Lunn¹³ was a good example—use the second while not denying the first. In either case, there is a certain reasoning involved. For the fundamentalist the assurance of Christ's divinity comes not through reason, or even through faith in the Catholic meaning of the word, but in a different way.

As Warfield put it, “The supreme proof to every Christian of the deity of his Lord is in his own inner experience of the transforming power of his Lord upon the heart and life.”¹⁴ One consequence of this has become painfully clear to many fundamentalists. When one falls into sin, or when the ardor that was present at conversion fades, the transforming power of Christ seems to go, and so might one's belief in his deity. It is one thing to say that belief should so manifest itself in Christians that people will say, “See how they love one another.” It is something else to posit the truth of Christ's divinity on the constancy of human holiness and spiritual consolations. This accounts for many defections from fundamentalism. The dark night of the soul, which visits many, results in jettisoning the fundamentalist position, and often what is embraced is not another brand of Christianity, but a vague agnosticism.

As an appendage to the doctrine of the deity of Christ, and considered equally important in *The Fundamentals*, is the Virgin Birth. (Some fundamentalists list this separately, making six basic doctrines instead of five.) One might expect the reality of heaven and hell or the existence of the Trinity to be next, but the Virgin Birth is taken as a vital belief, since it protects belief in Christ's deity. One should keep in mind, though, that when fundamentalists speak of Christ's birth from a virgin, they mean a virgin only until his birth. Their common understanding is that Mary had later children, all those disciples referred to as Christ's “brethren”.

In reaction to the Social Gospel advocates, who said Christ gave nothing more than a good moral example, the early fundamentalists insisted on their third point, that he died a substitutionary death. He not only took on our sins; he received the penalty that would have been ours. He was actually *punished* by the Father in our stead.

On the matter of the Resurrection fundamentalists do not differ from orthodox Catholics. Christ rose physically from the dead, not just symbolically. His Resurrection was not a collective hallucination of his followers or something invented by pious writers of later years. It really

happened, and to deny its actuality is to deny Scripture's reliability.

The most disputed topic, among fundamentalists themselves, is the Second Coming. If there is agreement, it is only on the point that Christ will physically return to Earth. When that will be is up for grabs. Premillennialists say it will be before the millennium, the thousand-year reign. Postmillennialists say it will be after. There is little consensus on just what the millennium itself will be. There are also disputes about the Rapture and the Tribulation. With respect to the latter, there is widespread disagreement on its nature and its timing with respect to the millennium. Some think it is around the corner, with the Russians playing the role assigned to the northern power in Daniel.¹⁵ Others say it is in the distant future. If Catholics may be called partial to St. Malachy's prophecies about the Popes and to the three secrets of Fatima, fundamentalists may be termed absorbed in chronicling the Last Days, the only difficulty being that no two major commentators agree on what will happen or when.

Such are the five or six main points discussed in the books that gave fundamentalism its name. They are not necessarily the points that most distinguish fundamentalism today. One rarely hears much discussion about the Virgin Birth, for instance. Of course, there is no question about fundamentalists believing that doctrine (but not the perpetual virginity of Mary), but to the general public, and to most fundamentalists themselves, fundamentalism has today a somewhat different emphasis.

First to catch one's eye is the fundamentalists' reliance on the Bible to the complete exclusion of any authority wielded by the Church. The second is their insistence in a faith in Christ as personal Lord and Savior. "Do you accept Christ as your personal Lord and Savior?" they ask. "Have you been saved?" This is unalloyed Christian individualism. The individual is saved without real regard to a church, the congregation, or anyone else. It is a one-to-one relationship, with no mediators, no sacraments, just the individual Christian and his Lord. The Christian *knows* when he has been saved, down to the hour and minute of his salvation, because his salvation came when he "accepted" Christ. It came like a flash, never to be forgotten, the way it came to Paul on the Damascus Road.

In that instant, the fundamentalist's salvation was assured. There is now nothing that can undo it. Without that instant, he would be doomed. That is why the third most visible thing about fundamentalists is their evangelism. If sinners do not undergo the same kind of salvation experience fundamentalists

have undergone, they will go to hell. Fundamentalists perceive a duty to spread their faith—what can be more charitable than to give others a chance for escaping hell?—and in that they have been successful.

Their success is partly due to their discipline. For all their talk about the Catholic Church being “rule-laden”, there are perhaps no Christians who operate today in a more regimented manner. Their rules—mainly nonbiblical, one might add—extend not just to religion and religious practices proper but to facets of everyday life. (Strictures on drinking, gambling, dancing, and smoking come to mind.)¹⁶ What is more, fundamentalists are intensely involved in their local congregations.

Many people returning to the Catholic Church from fundamentalism complain that as fundamentalists they had no time or room for themselves; everything centered around the church. All their friends were members; all their social activities were staged by it. Not to attend Wednesday evening services in addition to one or two services *on* Sunday, not to participate in Bible studies and youth groups, not to dress and act like everyone else in the congregation—these immediately put one beyond the pale, and in a small church (few fundamentalist churches have more than a hundred members) this meant ostracism, a silent invitation to worship elsewhere.

Many of the influences that have given rise to fundamentalism, including the fissiparousness of nineteenth-century Protestantism, have been signs of underlying puritanism—not, of course, the puritanism of the seventeenth-century Puritans, but the attitude that is at the core of every offshoot from traditional Christianity, the desire to return to the purity of the early Church. This kind of puritanism remains the motivating force of fundamentalism, as demonstrated by one of the key charges against the Catholic Church, that it has obscured the original purity of Christianity with centuries of unscriptural encrustations. For the fundamentalist, one of the first duties is to grasp the essence, the pith, of Christianity as it left the mouth of its Founder—and then to admit no “inventions”.

Many Catholics who have written about fundamentalism misunderstand it. They psychologize it into a mass of emotional contradictions. They accept the view of the popular press that fundamentalism is not a matter of theology but of pathology. A man subscribes to the fundamentalist position, it is said, because he is ashamed of being poor, or because he is ill educated, or because the priest or minister at his previous church mistreated him and he is out for revenge or for consoling pats on the back. He does not accept

fundamentalism the way an enlightened liberal accepts liberalism, with consideration and forethought. Some critics come perilously close to concluding that any fundamentalist is a loon. Granted, some are—but so are some Catholics and more than a few secularists.

Peggy L. Shriver, assistant general secretary of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States, says that “because an insecure ego can be supported by the scaffolding of a fundamentalist faith, it is not surprising that many people who are ‘marginal’ to society are drawn to fundamentalism. Various studies have shown that there are fewer wealthy and well-educated people who count themselves fundamentalists and a greater number of low-income and less educated people than the population at large.”¹⁷ This gentle put-down is imprudently echoed by Catholic writers, who might be surprised to learn that fundamentalists, such as Loraine Boettner in his *Roman Catholicism*, make the same charge against the Catholic religion, saying Catholic societies are backward compared to Protestant—after all, just look at Spain and Ireland, then at England and the United States. The Catholic Church finds its numbers among the poorer classes, they say, a sign that Catholicism is not blessed by God, since divine election manifests itself through material prosperity.¹⁸

Whatever forces might have steered a man to fundamentalism in the first place—and it must be granted that emotional factors play a part, as they do in most conversions, no matter the direction—he remains a fundamentalist for doctrinal reasons. He might have left his previous church out of anger or frustration, and he might have been attracted to the fundamentalist congregation down the road because the pastor is a fine preacher or because the church members befriended him.

These emotional pushes and pulls are short-lived, and in most cases they merely help the convert do what he wanted to do anyway. He could have found ministers as eloquent or congregants as kind in one of the mainline Protestant churches or even in some eccentric cult, but, as important as those factors might be, they were not the reason he converted. His conversion had to do with doctrines. The doctrines to which he adheres are not ones he discovered for himself, furtively reading the Bible late at night while his wife and children slept. The doctrines he was taught first, and the Bible has been used to justify them.

Fundamentalists use the Bible to protect beliefs that are, in fact, antecedent to the Bible, which is interpreted so it justifies what they already hold,

although most fundamentalists think what they believe comes straight out of the sacred text and that they are merely acknowledging its plain meaning. This confusion on their part is matched by one on the part of most nonfundamentalists, who think fundamentalists interpret Scripture in a strictly literal manner. This is incorrect. Fundamentalists do not take each word of the Bible in its surface sense, although it is commonly thought they do. To justify some of their doctrines, fundamentalists must discover in a metaphor a new “literal” interpretation of Scripture, and they not uncommonly find themselves arguing that what is really the plain, surface meaning is nothing but dangerous symbolism. They do not hesitate to read between the lines if such reading is needed to preserve their position—a position that precedes their scriptural interpretation.

In an analogous fashion, fundamentalists engaged in anti-Catholic work will interpret not just the Bible, but Christian history and Catholic creedal and apologetic works, in whatever way is required for them to prove their main point, that the Catholic religion bears only superficial resemblance to the religion founded by Christ, that it is mainly a religion of men, not of God. Their technique can be demonstrated by scrutinizing representative anti-Catholic publications, groups, and individuals.

Chapter 2

The Anti-Catholic's Sourcebook

We all like a good argument. We like the give-and-take, and we enjoy watching one party score a point and the second return the favor. A good argument, particularly on an important theme, stimulates our minds and helps us draw our own conclusions. We do not demand that each participant give both sides—each needs to give only his own, as well as he can—but we do insist on fair play. We do not want one participant to misrepresent what the other thinks or to make points by using cheap shots. Ridicule, misrepresentation, taking quotations out of context, bending the truth, leaving out important facts—these violate the rules of the game. We feel cheated if one side tries to gain an unfair advantage. If all this is true when the participants meet face to face before an audience, it is even truer when the argument is conducted in writing, when all we have is one side's version tucked between the covers of a book. Nowhere, perhaps, are these rules of fair play violated with greater regularity than in the writings of fundamentalists who attack the Catholic religion.

It is no secret that in recent years fundamentalist churches have been gaining members at a surprising rate. Many of the new recruits are former Catholics. In fact, in many fundamentalist churches, more than half the members converted from Catholicism. The reasons for the conversions are many, but most converts have been influenced by arguments attacking “Romanism”. Some fundamentalists who seek out Catholics as converts are not merely profundamentalist; they are also decidedly anti-Catholic. They expend more effort on abusing the Catholic religion than on justifying their own. They are more interested in showing Catholicism is wrong, no matter what it takes to “prove” that, than they are in showing their position is right.

Just a few years ago people were saying anti-Catholicism was going the way of the dinosaur. If so, it seems the dinosaur has made an unexpected comeback, because anti-Catholicism is healthier now than it has been for years. New organizations dedicated to undermining the Church keep

cropping up, and old ones are revived, and together they turn out more tracts, magazines, and books than ever before—millions of copies each year.

After reading enough of this material one becomes aware that the same points tend to be made in the same way, even in the same words. Who is borrowing from whom? It does not seem that any of these groups relies heavily on any other. Instead, they all seem to fall back on one source, Loraine Boettner's *Roman Catholicism*, which might be called the "Bible" of the anti-Catholic movement within fundamentalism. It is in this book that the anti-Catholic position is most extensively expressed. *Roman Catholicism* is worth examining, because what credibility the anti-Catholic movement has depends largely on the credibility of this one volume.

First, a few words about the author. Loraine Boettner has to his name a dozen books, several of them still in print. His first, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, was published in 1932. Other titles include *The Christian Attitude toward War*, *The Atonement*, and *Immortality*. In 1962 Boettner saw through the presses the book for which he is best known, *Roman Catholicism*. It was published by the Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company and has been reprinted numerous times. Well over a hundred thousand copies of *Roman Catholicism* have been sold, most of them in the last few years. After a career of teaching at Protestant schools of divinity, Boettner retired to Rock Port, Missouri, from which he still issues occasional salvos against Catholics, but for the most part he is retired from the fray and gives encouragement to younger people who have taken up his fight.

When *Roman Catholicism* was first published, the book and its author gained instant notoriety. Today there are many persons, organizations, and publications that are better known as promoters of anti-Catholicism, but none is more influential. Few people realize that most professional anti-Catholics are deeply indebted to Loraine Boettner's work. Pick up an anti-Catholic tract, then turn to the same subject in *Roman Catholicism*. As likely as not, the words will be the same, simple plagiarism. In the world of religious bigotry, it seems all roads lead to *Roman Catholicism*. That is not surprising, since this fat book is full of juicy tidbits. Its 466 pages are packed with countless accusations against Catholics and their religion. It was meant to be the definitive anti-Catholic work, something that would give intellectual substance to an attitude unwelcome in most circles.

Roman Catholicism operates at two levels. On the first and more important, it is an attack on the Catholic religion, its charges ranging across

doctrines, ecclesiastical and secular history, and Catholic customs. On the other level the book is a defense of Boettner's own beliefs. As he puts it, "The primary purpose of this work is to set forth in strong contrast the differences between the evangelical Protestant and the Roman Catholic churches, both in regard to doctrine and in regard to practical effects where these two systems have been effective in the lives of the people."¹ Nowadays the term fundamentalist would more commonly be used for the position Boettner espouses, and it is, indeed, mainly fundamentalists who use his text as their source of ammunition against the Catholic Church.

There is no room here to discuss each point Boettner brings up—the refutation of a one-sentence charge may take *a* page, and his tome would require a small library as an adequate reply—but the style of *Roman Catholicism* can be conveyed, and the reader can see there are serious deficiencies in the book, which forms the basis of the anti-Catholic movement.

The main problem with Boettner's *magnum opus* is that it suffers from a real lack of intellectual rigor. For example, he shows virtually no familiarity with the writings of the first several centuries of the Christian era. He skips from the Bible to nineteenth- and twentieth-century anti-Catholic works. Even if he would not go to original sources, he could have examined Johannes Quasten's *Patrology*, the first three volumes of which were composed in the decade before *Roman Catholicism* was written, or Joseph Tixeront's *History of Dogmas*, an older but standard work. A casual reading of these should have demonstrated to him that from the earliest years distinctive Catholic doctrines were present—belief in the Real Presence, the hierarchy of bishops and priests, papal supremacy, suffrages for the dead—and he should have seen there is little support for the fundamentalist position. Even if he refused to draw the ordinary conclusions from Quasten and Tixeront, he at least would have been put on notice that he had more to consider. He just takes too much for granted.

There is no indication that he has made use of any hardheaded apologetic works by Catholics or that he has tested his arguments against a knowledgeable opponent before reducing them to print. His major sources are people who do not just disagree with Catholicism but who openly oppose it, often for what the reader suspects to be base motives. Boettner accepts at face value any claim made by an enemy of the Church. Even when verification of a charge is easy, he does not bother to check up. If he finds something

unflattering, he prints it.

Take as an example his reliance on William Cave, chaplain to King Charles II, who wrote in *The Lives of the Apostles* that in the Greek original of Eusebius Pamphilius' *Ecclesiastical History*, completed about 325, there is no reference to Peter being Bishop of Rome. Boettner accepts this as sufficient proof that the apostle was never in the capital of the Empire, a fact he wishes to use in debunking the papacy.² He could have checked Cave's assertion easily. Had he looked at the two-volume edition of the *Ecclesiastical History* in the Loeb Classical Library, he would have found on pages 144 and 190 of volume one and page 48 of volume two just what Cave said was not there.

Despite the reliance of so many pamphleteers on Boettner's book, the only thing that makes it seem substantial is its weight in pounds. Its weight in scholarly attainment is nil. It has an index of authors and an index of subjects, each only a page and a half long. In the whole book there are only two dozen footnotes, all of them added to reflect minor changes in the Catholic Church since Vatican II. Within the text biblical passages are properly cited, but references to Catholic works are usually so vague as to discourage checking. A certain Pope is alleged to have said something, but there is no citation. A Catholic author of the seventeenth century supposedly claimed such-and-so, but again no reference. A quotation might be given, but no hint as to its source. Or there might be mention of a book, but no page number. Most statements that in other books would deserve footnotes get nothing at all here. Sources that include both title and page number (and they are rare) are generally to non-Catholic works. Indeed, if this were a book on science or economics, and if it were put out by an academic press, the publisher would have insisted on literally hundreds of notes to back up the equally large number of citations, claims, and interpretations. But we get none of that here.

The lack of citations would not be important if Boettner were merely expounding his own position, but they are crucial when he dredges up what seem to be self-condemnatory admissions by Catholics. He would be under no obligation to burden his book with references if he were only stating what fundamentalism is. But more must be expected of an author who accuses the opposition of knavery and deception.

Although not all works referred to in the body of the text are listed in the bibliography, most are—yet the bibliography names only twenty-three books and three magazines. Only seven of the books, and none of the magazines,

are by Catholics.³ One book, by Fulton Sheen, is an “inspirational” text and, while enjoyable reading, has little to do with the matters discussed in *Roman Catholicism*. A second book is a look at the lives of a few Popes; another is on Catholic principles of politics, a topic hardly touched on by Boettner. Three others are overviews of the Catholic faith written for laymen, not one of which was designed to answer the kinds of attacks Boettner launches.⁴ The seventh book is Philip Hughes’ *A Popular History of the Catholic Church*, an abridgment of his three-volume work *A History of the Church*. As it turns out, Boettner refers to only a few lines from Hughes’ book, and those are taken out of context.⁵

Of the sixteen books by non-Catholics, six are by former Catholic priests: Emmett McLoughlin; L. H. Lehmann; Joseph Zacchello; and Charles Chiniquy, the famous nineteenth-century sensationalist.⁶ There is also an expose by a former nun. To round out the picture, Boettner lists a book by Paul Blanshard, perhaps the best-known professional anti-Catholic of a generation ago. These are the books—written by disaffected ex-Catholics or by people who never have been Catholic but who have made their mark in the world by pushing unadorned bigotry—from which Boettner gets his juiciest information. Relying on them for the straight story on the Catholic Church is like relying on a political candidate to tell you all the good points about his opponent. Surely Boettner would object to an attack on Martin Luther’s theology that made use of works by disgruntled ex-Lutherans but ignored Luther’s own writings. He would say, and rightly so, that such an attack was unbalanced, and that is just the kind of thing a reader might say of *Roman Catholicism* when he discovers how much it relies on tales from angry ex-Catholics.

Now it may well be that a man leaving one religion for another can write fairly, without bitterness, about the one he left behind. After all, John Henry Newman did just that in his autobiography, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*. But it stands to reason that most people who suddenly think they have an urge to write about their change of beliefs just want to vent their frustrations or justify their actions. Their books should be read and used with discretion, and they should not be used at all as explanations of the beliefs of their old religion if the books betray the least hint of rancor. Unfortunately, Boettner cannot keep away from such books.

Because of his reliance on disgruntled former Catholics, Boettner has absolutely no appreciation of the Catholic religion from the inside. He has

made little effort to learn what the Catholic Church says about itself and how Catholics answer the objections he makes. What “inside information” he has comes from people who can hardly be trusted to tell the Catholic side of the story. In case after case, no matter what the topic, Boettner provides only a statement of the fundamentalist position, which he then juxtaposes to a caricature of the Catholic position as set out by one of the ex-priests. Without fail, whenever the Catholic position looks foolish, as it often does in his book, it is because it has been entirely misstated. Boettner is not content with honestly giving the Catholic view and then explaining why he considers it wrong; he must give a parody of the Catholic view, and then he refutes *that*.

But that is not all. There are literally hundreds of errors of fact in this book. In any ten consecutive pages one can find ten palpable blunders. These are real mistakes, not innocent things such as typographical errors. There are major errors, and there are minor ones, and they lead one to ask at what point does sloppiness become more than mere negligence? When does it show actual bad faith, a deliberate unwillingness to do one’s homework?

Consider the case of Bishop Josip Strossmayer. First take the story as given by Boettner in his chapter on the infallibility of the Pope. This doctrine was formally defined at the First Vatican Council in 1870: Before the definition was voted on by the assembled prelates, some spoke against ratifying it. One who did so was Strossmayer. Here is how Boettner recounts the story:

Among those who opposed the decree was the scholarly archbishop [actually, bishop] Strossmayer, who made a famous speech in which he declared boldly: “I have set myself to study with the most serious attention the Old and New Testaments, and I have asked these venerable monuments of truth to make known to me if the holy pontiff, who presides here, is the true successor of St. Peter, vicar of Christ, and the infallible doctor of the church. I find in the apostolic days no question of a pope, successor to St. Peter, the vicar of Jesus Christ, any more than a Mohammed who did not then exist. Now having read the whole New Testament, I declare before God, with my hand raised to that great crucifix, that I have found no trace of the papacy as it exists at this moment.”

Immediately after that long quotation, Boettner gives what he says is the end of the speech. The last sentence reads: “I conclude victoriously, with history, with reason, with logic, with good sense, and with a Christian conscience, that Jesus Christ did not confer any supremacy on St. Peter, and that the bishops of Rome did not become sovereigns of the church, but only by confiscating one by one all the rights of the episcopate.”⁷

Strong language, eh? Boettner gives no source for these words attributed to

Strossmayer, and with good reason. Their source was not Strossmayer. Had Boettner turned to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, he would have discovered half a page on “the scholarly archbishop”, and he would have discovered that the speech is a well-known forgery, composed by a former Augustinian priest named José Augustín de Escudero.⁸

What was Strossmayer’s real position on infallibility? Did he oppose the promulgation of the dogma? Yes, he did. He opposed it for ecumenical reasons. He was the bishop of Diakovar, in what is now Yugoslavia. For years he had been working for a reunification of the Eastern Orthodox churches with the Catholic Church. He thought such a reunification was a real possibility and that the formal promulgation of the doctrine of papal infallibility would be an obstacle.

Boettner explains none of this, but the facts were easily accessible to him. Read again the words attributed to Strossmayer. Do they read like the words of a European who obtained a doctorate in philosophy at twenty and a doctorate in theology at twenty-seven, who taught canon law at the University of Vienna, who was praised for his “remarkably good Latin” by the Pope? No, they read like the words of a longtime Protestant. Note, too, the sloppy way the forgery was drawn up. This “scholarly archbishop” prefaces his declaration with the clause “now having read the whole New Testament”, which apparently means he had never gone through the sacred text before. At the time of Vatican I Strossmayer was fifty-five. Are we to believe this learned and mature man had never read the New Testament before the convening of the Council?

Boettner’s great failing with respect to this incident is that he took no pains at all to investigate the Catholic version of the story. It would have taken ten minutes at a library to discover that the speech was not what it purported to be. He did not have to believe the *Catholic Encyclopedia* or the numerous ecclesiastical histories written by Catholics, yet he should have become suspicious when they said the speech is a forgery. He should have done further homework. But he was not as interested in accuracy as in sensationalism, which is always the enemy of truth. This story is such a great blow against the Catholic Church—why spoil it with the facts?

This gaffe about Strossmayer’s speech is bad enough, but it is prefaced by a worse one. The beginning of the chapter on the infallibility of the Pope presents the reader with Boettner’s explanation of what Vatican I decreed. First he accurately quotes *Pastor Aeternus*, which states that the Pope is

infallible when “he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when in discharge of the office of pastor and doctor of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme Apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine regarding faith and morals to be held by the universal Church.”⁹

Then comes the blooper. Boettner says, “Infallibility is not claimed for every statement made by the pope [true enough], but only for those made when he is speaking *ex cathedra*, that is, seated in his papal chair, the chair of St. Peter, and speaking in his official capacity as head of the church.”¹⁰ At the end of the sentence is an asterisk, which takes the reader to this footnote: “A scientific commission appointed by pope Paul VI in July, 1968, to investigate the antiquity of the ‘Chair of St. Peter’. . . reported early in 1969 that the chair dates from the late ninth century. . . .” The point is that Peter’s real chair does not exist, so a Pope cannot sit in it. Since, by official decree of Vatican I, he is infallible only when sitting in Peter’s chair, he cannot issue infallible definitions at all. The Catholic Church is refuted by its own archaeology!

Boettner entirely misconstrues the meaning of *ex cathedra*. It indeed translates as “from the throne” or “from the chair”, but it does not mean the Pope has to be sitting in the chair Peter owned for his definition to be infallible. To speak “from the chair” is to speak in an official capacity, as when we say a judge speaks “from the bench”, even if he makes his ruling while standing in the courthouse hallway. This is another mistake Boettner could have avoided had he turned to a dictionary or encyclopedia.

Although he says infallibility extends only to matters of faith and morals, and then only when a Pope makes an official pronouncement addressed to all Christians, Boettner does not understand the principles he quotes. He apparently does not realize that a Pope is not claimed to be infallible when he tries to predict tomorrow’s weather or solve today’s arithmetic problem. This should be apparent to Boettner, but it is not, as shown by the following example. He relates that in the year 1590 Sixtus V issued an edition of the Vulgate which he declared to be final, and prohibited under an anathema the publication of any new editions thereafter unless they should be exactly like that one. However, he died soon after, and scholars found numerous errors in his edition. Two years later a new edition was published under pope Clement VIII, and that is the one in general use today. Clearly Sixtus V was in error—another example of the absurdity of that doctrine which holds that the pope is infallible in matters of faith and morals.¹¹

But a Pope's order that no one should publish a version of the Vulgate differing from the official version has nothing to do with faith and morals. It is not a matter of faith that any particular edition of the Bible is without printing errors or that it has been translated accurately. The order by Sixtus V was merely a matter of discipline; it did not define a point of doctrine or of morals, a distinction Boettner does not appreciate.

One of his key points in *Roman Catholicism* is that "Romanism" must be untrue because in so many particulars it differs from the Christianity of the New Testament. Over the centuries, he says, the Catholic Church has added beliefs, rituals, and customs that contradict what is found in the Bible. He calls this "the melancholy evidence of Rome's steadily increasing departure from the simplicity of the Gospel", and he claims "human inventions have been substituted for Bible truth and practice".¹²

His point is that Catholicism cannot be the religion established by Christ because it has all these "extras", forty-five of which he lists under the title "Some Roman Catholic Heresies and Inventions".¹³ A few he examines at greater length later in the book, but most are mentioned once here and then conveniently forgotten. Although his listing takes up little space, its tone is representative of that of the book as a whole. Consider a few of the "inventions".

Item: "Making the sign of the cross. . . [A.D.] 300".¹⁴ That's it. That's the whole charge, that the sign of the Cross was not "invented" until well into the Christian era. Actually, Christians began making the sign of the Cross at a very early date. The theologian Tertullian, writing in 211, said, "We furrow our forehead with the sign [of the Cross]."¹⁵ Making the sign was already an old custom when he wrote. It may have been common even while some of the apostles were alive. But the mistake Boettner makes in the antiquity of the practice is not the important thing. The real question is: Why does he include this point at all? The answer: because the sign of the Cross is something not found in the pages of the New Testament. The reader is to conclude that it must be contrary to Christianity, yet that makes little sense. In fact, such a principle undermines even Boettner's own fundamentalism.

After all, fundamentalists meet for worship on Sunday, yet there is no evidence in the Bible that corporate worship was to be made on Sundays. The Jewish Sabbath, or day of rest, was, of course, Saturday. It was the Catholic Church that decided Sunday should be the day of worship for Christians, in honor of the Resurrection. And what about the form of fundamentalist

services: hymns, readings, preaching? No mention is made in the New Testament of the form of worship (other than that set out at the Last Supper, which gives the outline of the Mass). If Catholicism has changed matters of practice or customs over the centuries, fundamentalism has done the same. The proper question is not whether the Church founded by Christ looks today exactly as it did then (if that is the criterion, then his Church cannot be found anywhere), but whether what purports to be his Church has kept all the same beliefs, while understanding them better and drawing out their implications more deeply, even if in external practices the Church has developed and changed over the years.

Item: “Priests began to dress differently from laymen. . .500”. So what? The same charge can be brought against fundamentalist preachers who conduct services while dressed in choir robes. Boettner’s statement happens to be true, but it proves nothing. The main vestment worn by priests during Mass is the chasuble. It is really nothing more than a stylized Roman overcoat. In the sixth century, while fashions changed around them, for liturgical purposes priests kept to the clothing they had used for some time. They did not adopt special dress for Mass, but, as everyday fashions changed over time, their dress began to stand out.

On very formal occasions today, such as a presidential inauguration, the principal players wear top hats and tails. You do not otherwise see that kind of clothing anymore, but remember that Abraham Lincoln wore the equivalent as his regular attire. The present-day use of top hats and tails is another example of dress for a special occasion being frozen in a particular style. It just so happens that priests’ vestments are much older than top hats.

Item: “Extreme unction. . . 526”. This single line is no doubt intended to make the reader believe the Catholic Church invented this sacrament, which is also known as the anointing of the sick, five centuries after Christ. Notice that Boettner makes no effort to give the Church’s explanation of the sacrament’s origin. Why? Because the origin is found in the New Testament itself: “Is one of you sick? Let him send for the presbyters of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Lord’s name. Prayer offered in faith will restore the sick man, and the Lord will give him relief; if he is guilty of sins, they will be pardoned” (James 5:14-15). This scriptural injunction was followed from the earliest days of the Church. If Boettner wanted to say this sacrament was “invented”, he should have said it was “invented” while the apostles were still alive, but that, of course, would give

the sacrament legitimacy.

Item: “Latin language, used in prayer and worship, imposed by [Pope] Gregory I. . . 600”. Now it is true that Latin was used in worship in the year 600. The Church spread from the Greek-speaking East to the Latin-speaking West in apostolic times. One of Paul’s epistles was written to the Christians in Latin-speaking Rome. It should cause no raised eyebrows to learn that worship was undertaken in the vernacular, which was Greek in much of the East and Latin in the West. What is Boettner’s point? Maybe his complaint is that the Pope “imposed” Latin, forbidding other languages to be used. In the West, Latin did come to be used in the Mass to the exclusion of vernacular languages (such as French, German, and English) that developed centuries later because Latin became the official language of the Catholic Church—something it still is. (Vatican documents of importance are still issued in authoritative Latin versions.) Are we to conclude that there is some mystery about it? Well, there probably is, to people who do not read Latin, just as there is mystery in French to those who know only English.

So what is Boettner trying to say with this “invention”? Perhaps he wants to suggest that, until recently, priests used Latin, even after the people had turned to vernacular tongues, in order to keep secret such things as what was happening during Mass. That theory does not hold up, since even Catholics who knew no Latin knew what was going on at Mass—all they had to do was look on the right-hand pages of their missals to see the translation of the Latin that was on the facing pages. If Church authorities were trying to keep laymen ignorant about the Mass, by encouraging the use of missals they approached their task in a self-defeating way.

Item: “Worship of the cross, images, and relics authorized in. . . 786”. Do Catholics give slivers of wood, carvings of marble, and pieces of bone the kind of adoration they give God? That is what Boettner seems to say. What if a Catholic were to say to him, “I saw you kneeling with your Bible in your hands. Why do you worship a book?” He would rightly answer that he does not worship a book. He uses the Bible as an aid to prayer. Likewise, Catholics do not worship the Cross or images or relics. They use these physical objects to remind themselves of Christ and his special friends, the saints in heaven. The man who keeps a picture of his family in his wallet does not worship his wife and children, but he honors them. The woman who keeps her parents’ picture on the mantel does not subscribe to ancestor worship; the picture just reminds her of them so she can honor them. (Recall

Ex 20:12: “Honor thy father and thy mother.”) No one really thinks the pictures are themselves the objects of worship.

The origin of Boettner’s story is this. In the Byzantine Empire there developed what was known as the Iconoclastic heresy, which held that all images (statues, paintings, mosaics) of saints and of God must be destroyed on the theory that they were meant to be worshiped. Eventually, around 786, this heresy was defeated, and the old custom, going back to the first century, of permitting artistic representations was again allowed. Boettner has the date right; he just does not understand the story.

Item: “Baptism of bells instituted by Pope John XIII. . . 965”. What is the reader supposed to make of this? Most non-Catholics realize that Catholics baptize infants, but bells? If Catholics think they can baptize bells, why not baptize automobiles or any other inanimate object? The charge, if true, does make the Church look silly—and in a sense it really is true. There was indeed a “baptism of bells”, but it was not a baptism. When a church received new bells for its tower, the bells were blessed, usually by the local bishop. Any object can be blessed, a blessing being a dedication to a sacred purpose. The ceremony used in the blessing of bells was reminiscent in some ways of the ceremony used in baptism (the bells were even given nicknames), so in popular usage it came to be called the “baptism of bells”, although no Catholic thought the bells actually received a sacrament. The phrase is therefore wholly innocent, but when anti-Catholics refer to it in just a few words it looks suspicious.

Item: “Celibacy of the priesthood, decreed by pope Gregory VII (Hildebrand). . . 1079”. Anti-Catholics take considerable delight in noting that some of the apostles, including Peter, were married and that for centuries Catholic priests were allowed to marry. Catholics do not deny that some early Popes were married and that celibacy, for priests in the Latin (Western) Rite, did not become mandatory until the early Middle Ages. Anti-Catholic writers generally fail to note that all along married men have been eligible for ordination in the Eastern rites. Celibacy has never been mandatory in those rites, but in the Latin Rite it has been, as a matter of discipline. It came to be thought in the West that priests could more perfectly fulfill their duties if they remained unmarried. This follows Paul’s advice.

After saying he wished those to whom he was writing were, like himself, unmarried (1 Cor 7:7-9), Paul said he thought celibacy was the best state in which to be (1 Cor 7:26), noting that “he who is unmarried is concerned with

God's claim, asking how he is to please God; whereas the married man is concerned with the world's claim, asking how he is to please his wife" (1 Cor 7:32-33). When a man becomes a priest in the Latin Rite, he knows that he will not be able to marry. Marriage is a good thing (in fact, Catholics acknowledge Christ elevated marriage to a sacrament), but it is something priests are willing to forgo for the sake of being better priests. No one is forced to be a priest (or a nun, for that matter; nuns also do not marry) so no Catholic is forced to be celibate. Those who want to take the vows of the religious life should not object to having to follow the rules. That does not mean that the rules, as found at any one time, are ideal or cannot be modified—celibacy is a disciplinary, not a doctrinal, injunction—but it does mean that it is unfair to imply from the rules, as Boettner has, that the Catholic religion scorns marriage.

Item: "Transubstantiation proclaimed by Pope Innocent III. . . 1215". The implication is that transubstantiation was not believed until 1215—that it was, indeed, an "invention". The facts are otherwise. Transubstantiation is just the technical term used to describe what happens when the bread and wine used at Mass are turned into the actual Body and Blood of Christ. The belief that this occurs has been held from the earliest times. It stems from the sixth chapter of John's Gospel, the eleventh chapter of First Corinthians, and the several accounts of the Last Supper. As centuries passed, theologians exercised their reason on the belief to understand more completely how such a thing could happen and what its happening would imply. Because some of them, in trying to explain the Real Presence, developed unsound theories,¹⁶ it became evident that more precise terminology was needed to ensure the integrity of the belief. The word transubstantiation was finally chosen because it eliminated certain unorthodox interpretations of the doctrine, and the term was formally imposed at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. So the use of the technical term was new, but not the doctrine. Similarly, although the term Trinity was first used by Theophilus of Antioch about 181, Christians certainly believed in the doctrine from apostolic times. They may not have understood its ramifications as they are understood today, but they believed in the Trinity. The doctrine was not invented when the official term was coined.

Item: "Auricular confession of sins to a priest instead of to God, instituted by pope Innocent III, in Lateran Council. . . 1215". It is charges such as this that make one doubt the good faith of professional anti-Catholics. It would

have taken little to discover the antiquity of auricular confession—and even less to learn that Catholics do not tell their sins to a priest “instead of to God”, but to God *through* a priest, appointed by our Lord as an *alter Christus*, or “other Christ”, an official stand-in for Christ.

Origen, writing around 244, referred to the sinner who “does not shrink from declaring his sin to a priest of the Lord”.¹⁷ Cyprian of Carthage, writing seven years later, said, “Finally, of how much greater faith and more salutary fear are they who . . . confess to the priests of God in a straightforward manner and in sorrow, making an open declaration of conscience.”¹⁸ In the fourth century Aphraates gave this advice to priests: “If anyone uncovers his wound before you, give him the remedy of repentance. And he that is ashamed to make known his weakness, encourage him so that he will not hide it from you. And when he has revealed it to you, do not make it public.”¹⁹

These men, writing as much as a thousand years before the Lateran Council of 1215, were referring to a practice that was already old and well established, a practice stemming from apostolic times. Christ commissioned the apostles this way: “When you forgive men’s sins, they are forgiven, when you hold them bound, they are held bound” (Jn 20:23). Clearly, no priest can forgive sins on Christ’s behalf unless first told the sins by the penitent. Auricular confession is implied in the very institution of the sacrament. The Lateran Council did not “invent” the practice; it merely reaffirmed it while emphasizing the importance of penance.

Item: “Adoration of the wafer (host), decreed by pope Honorius III. . . 1220”. What the reader is supposed to think, apparently, is that Catholics worship the bread used at Mass. They do not. What they worship is Christ, and they believe the bread and the wine are turned into his actual Body and Blood, including not only his human nature, but also his divine nature. If Catholics are right about that, then surely the host deserves to be worshiped, since it really is God. This matter was properly dealt with in 1769 by Samuel Johnson, who was an Anglican, not a Catholic. His biographer, James Boswell, asked him about “the idolatry of the Mass”. “Sir,” replied Dr. Johnson, “there is no idolatry in the Mass. [Catholics] believe God to be there, and they worship him.”²⁰ So, if Catholics are right, then a Pope would be correct in decreeing that the host should be worshiped, just as he would be right to say Jesus should be worshiped if he were to walk into the room. Boettner should direct his complaint not at some nonexistent worship of

ordinary bread, but at Catholics' notion that the bread becomes something other than bread.

Item: "Bible forbidden to laymen, placed on the Index of Forbidden Books by the Council of Valencia. . . 1229". This looks damaging, but the first thing to note is that there are several errors here. The first is that the Index was established in 1543, so a council held in 1229 hardly could have listed a book on it. Second, there apparently never has been a Church council held in Valencia, Spain. Even if there had been, it could not have been held in 1229 because the city was then controlled by the Moors. It is inconceivable that Moslems, who were at war with Spanish Christians and had been off and on for five centuries, would allow Catholic bishops to hold a council in one of their chief cities. The Christian armies did not liberate Valencia from Moorish rule until nine years later, in 1238. So Valencia is out. But there is another possibility, and that is Toulouse, France, where a council (but not an ecumenical council) was indeed held in 1229. And, yes, that council dealt with the Bible, yet here again Boettner errs. He says the Bible was forbidden to laymen; the implication is that no layman anywhere was permitted from that point on to read any Bible. Not so.

The council held in Toulouse dealt with the Albigensian heresy, a variety of Manichaeism, which maintained that marriage is evil because the flesh is evil. From this the heretics concluded that fornication could be no sin because what happens to flesh is of no importance. They even encouraged ritualistic suicide among their members because self-murder, which affected only an evil body, could not be immoral. They opposed the taking of oaths, and this undermined the social order, since feudalism rested on oaths of loyalty to one's superior, much the way our society rests on the security of contracts.

In order to promulgate their views, the Albigensians used vernacular versions of the Bible to "substantiate" their theories. The Church had no complaint about mere translations of the Bible; vernacular versions had been appearing for centuries. But the Albigensians were twisting the Bible to support an immoral moral system. So the bishops at Toulouse restricted the use of the Bible until the heresy was ended. They were trying to stop the heresy's spread because it was the cause of civil unrest and considerable suffering. Their action was a local one, and when the Albigensian problem disappeared, so did the force of their order, which never affected more than southern France. This is hardly the across-the-board prohibition of the Bible

that Boettner, for debating purposes, would like to see but that never existed.

Item: “Cup forbidden to the people at communion by Council of Constance. . . 1414”. The implication is that bishops and priests were trying to keep from laymen something they should have had by rights. The real situation is not hard to understand. The Catholic position has always been that after the Consecration the actual Body and Blood of Christ are contained in the smallest particle of the host or the tiniest drop from the cup. One does not receive only the Body in the host and only the Blood from the cup. If that were so, then for a complete Communion one indeed would need to partake of both. But if both the Body and Blood are contained in each, then the communicant needs to receive only one, if there are good reasons for imposing such a restriction. In 1414 there seemed to be. The first reason was that some people misunderstood the Eucharist and thought it had to be received under both forms because one form contained only the Body and the other only the Blood. By restricting communicants to the host alone the Church emphasized the true doctrine. The other reason was a practical one. In giving the cup to the laity there was a chance the contents would be spilled, so, out of respect, the restriction was imposed.

Item: “Apocryphal books added to the Bible by the Council of Trent. . . 1546”. This is reminiscent of the remark made in *1066 and All That* that at the English Reformation “the pope and his followers seceded from the Church of England”—the difference being that Boettner is serious. The fact is that the Council of Trent did not add to the Bible what Protestants call the apocryphal books. Instead, the Reformers dropped from the Bible books that had been in common use for centuries. The Council of Trent, convened to reaffirm Catholic doctrines and to revitalize the Church, proclaimed that these books always had belonged to the Bible and had to remain in it. After all, it was the Catholic Church, in the fourth century, that officially decided which books composed the canon of the Bible and which did not. The Council of Trent came on the scene about twelve centuries later and merely restated the ancient position.

These “inventions” are representative of the forty-five listed by Boettner. No effort is made to give sources for his charges, and little effort is made to say what the significance of the “inventions” might be. That task is left to innuendo. What Boettner implies is that any belief or practice not found in the pages of the New Testament in plain words must be spurious and must have been instituted for some nefarious purpose.

What he does not point out is that fundamentalism has doctrines and customs that are not found in the Bible either. Many fundamentalist churches, for example, forbid the drinking of wine as sinful, yet Christ not only drank wine—he was even accused of being a drunkard (Lk 7:34)—but he made wine out of water, hardly something he would have done had he disapproved of drinking it. The examples could be multiplied. The fact is that no church looks exactly the same as that of the New Testament era, and, since Christ founded a living Church, one should expect it, like any living thing, to grow and mature, changing somewhat in appearance while maintaining the same identity and substance, holding on to the original deposit of faith while coming to understand it more deeply. The real question is not why Catholicism has produced “inventions” but why one thinks Christ’s Church should not have.

The imaginativeness displayed in Boettner’s “inventions” is representative of the writing one finds throughout *Roman Catholicism*. Consider some of his other comments. He calls All Souls’ Day, November 2, “Purgatory Day”,²¹ a term never used by Catholics because the feast is not in commemoration of purgatory but of the souls there. He thinks the sacrament of orders involves not just the ordination of priests, but the “consecration of nuns”.²² He believes Our Lady of Guadalupe was really “a goddess worshipped by the Indians in Mexico”.²³ As an argument against monasticism, he says Christ “did not withdraw himself from the world, nor did he teach his disciples to do so”.²⁴ Boettner forgets that Christ spent forty days in the desert in preparation for his public ministry (Mt 4:1-11; Lk 4:1-13), and if that is not withdrawing oneself from the world, what is?

More common than these silly mistakes are Boettner’s appeals to sensationalism. He says “the feeling of fear and dread of the priest, so characteristic of people in Romanist lands, is comparable only to the fear and dread that pagan people have for the witch doctor”,²⁵ which demonstrates how little he knows of either. He argues against the Real Presence by saying the Catholic understanding of the Eucharist amounts to “cannibalism”.²⁶ He suggests the Church encourages devotion to Mary because pilgrimages made in her honor bring “huge revenues to the Vatican”.²⁷ What is more, Mary is thought of by Catholics “as a kind of fourth person of the Blessed Trinity”.²⁸ He believes a “large number of gangsters and crooked politicians in the big cities . . . have maintained their standing in the church while continuing

uninterruptedly their evil practices. . . . It is generally accepted that Romanists, having been to Mass, especially on Sunday, can do about as they please the remainder of the day.”²⁹

Boettner approves of the opinion of another writer that “the intellectual and moral level of priests is not nearly as high as, for instance, that of teachers and doctors, and. . . only a minority have any exceptional ability or deep religious feeling”.³⁰ He asks, “Why is it. . . that the Roman Catholics of Southern Ireland are so inferior to their Protestant neighbors in Northern Ireland?” His answer is a quotation from Charles Chiniquy, who said “the principal cause of the degradation of Ireland is the enslavement of the Irish women by means of the confessional”.³¹ And, according to a book Boettner cites, young women who enter the convent are taught to hate their parents.³² The list could go on, but why bother?

Bishop Fulton Sheen said that few people in America hate the Catholic religion, but many people hate what they mistakenly believe is the Catholic religion—and that if what is hated really were the Catholic religion, Catholics would hate it, too. Confusing lists—lists intended to cause confusion, such as the one published in *Roman Catholicism*—and gratuitous slurs have done much to foster this hatred and confusion. What is more, they have discouraged fundamentalists from finding out what the Catholic religion really is, and that is a disservice to both fundamentalists and Catholics.

A reader can forgive an author a few mistakes. Perhaps the publication schedule did not allow all the checking and rechecking he might have wanted. Maybe the book’s editor was incompetent. The typesetter may have erred. But when the mistakes are so gross and so frequent as Boettner’s, when there is almost no effort to present the other side’s point of view, when the “authorities” one relies on to state the Catholic position are mainly professional Catholic baiters—when all this happens, can the reader be blamed for thinking the book was composed in bad faith?

Like others before him, Loraine Boettner has found an enemy of his own fashioning. He castigates it, misrepresents it, ridicules it, but it is not the Catholic religion as Catholics know it, and the “history” he presents is not the history of the Catholic Church. He has given the public what may be fundamentalism’s most sustained attack on “Romanism”. It is an attack that has enjoyed, so far, a certain success, but its manifest inadequacy suggests that it, too, will pass. *Roman Catholicism* has been an effective propaganda tool only because its arguments were not challenged early enough by

Catholics. Now that is changing. Eventually Boettner's book and the anti-Catholic movement relying on it will be widely appreciated to be the embarrassments they are. Toward that end, it may be profitable to examine some of the groups and persons that have drawn their inspiration from Boettner.

Chapter 3

A Mission to Catholics

Outside the Baptist church where the head of Mission to Catholics International was to speak there was a large table filled with Catholic artifacts. It was set up for the titillation of the congregants. People were shaking their heads over what they saw, wondering how these pagan trinkets could be used by folks who called themselves Christians. Bartholomew F. (“Bart”) Brewer, a former Discalced Carmelite priest, was going to tell these California Baptists the dark secrets of the Catholic Church. He had been to this church before, but they were anxious to hear more stories about the people trapped in Romanism. Next week he would be halfway across the country, telling the same things to others, some old friends, some new listeners.

Ruth Brewer, Bart’s wife, stood behind the table and explained what these peculiar items were. She pointed out holy cards, rosaries, medals, scapulars, crucifixes. The main attractions were a chalice filled with small hosts and a large priest’s host, all presumably unconsecrated. They were brittle with age, but quite serviceable—“Cookie Christs”, as some opponents of the Church call them. To one side were some of the dozens of tracts published by Mission to Catholics, each attacking some facet of Catholicism, and books and cassette tapes that the Brewers’ ministry made available. It was a festive occasion.¹

The service began with the customary hymns, a few homiletic words from the minister, and announcements from Brother This and Sister That. Then Bart Brewer was introduced, and he told them what he had told them before, and they loved it. “Amen, brother!” someone shouted, and he was echoed by others in the small church. “Amen, amen!” Heads nodded in agreement at each revelation of Catholic iniquity and shook in despair as the listeners were told of the doom awaiting Romanists if they did not convert to Christianity.

The talk was part anatomical, part autobiographical. Brewer dissected Catholicism, using quotations from the Bible to show how it strayed from the

New Testament. The treatments of Catholic doctrine and history were cursory and, unsurprisingly, skewed; there was no effort to suggest what the Catholic rejoinders might be. He mentioned experiences as a priest, how his reading the Bible convinced him the Catholic Church was not the Church established by Christ. He spoke about his ministry, which started small but, although still small in terms of personnel (his wife, at least one paid assistant, and several volunteers to handle the mail), had grown so that he regularly crisscrossed the country and mailed out hundreds of thousands of tracts and thousands of books² and cassettes each year.³

He ended his talk the way he ends them all, with an appeal for action. If Catholics do not leave the Church of Rome, he said, they will be damned. Like the Moslems, like the Jews, they will go to hell, and their pious actions will not help them in the least. They must be saved, and it is up to real Christians to take the gospel to them. The way to do that is to wean them from the Catholic Church, showing them its errors, how it contradicts the Bible, how it has been built on paganism.

A good way to start, he said, is by forming a committee for evangelization. The members pray together and then head for the front, the lines of battle being drawn outside Catholic churches. There, as people leave Mass on Sunday morning, Mission to Catholics tracts are distributed. (The most zealous evangelists might, after the last Mass and despite treading on pagan ground, enter the churches and, going even further than Brewer advises, slip tracts into missalettes. That way Catholics would read the truth about the Mass during the Mass itself.)⁴

Of course, distributing tracts implies fielding questions, so the committee members would have to do more than just pray in preparation for their ministry. They would have to study. First would come Scripture. Already avid Bible readers, they would have to redouble their efforts to anticipate any Catholic rebuttals. Then, of course, they would review the Mission to Catholics materials, including its tracts; monthly newsletter, *Challenger*; and Bart Brewer's autobiography, *Pilgrimage from Rome*.⁵ Next, they could turn to literature put out by other anti-Catholic organizations. There would be much to learn, but much to learn from. Indeed, there is no shortage of anti-Catholic materials and no shortage of anti-Catholic organizations. This is a boom industry, and Bart Brewer is on the cutting edge. But his is not the only group convincing people to leave St. Miscellanius' for Good Book Baptist, and Mission to Catholics was not even first on the scene, nor has it received

the most press.

At the fringe, and therefore garnering the most publicity, are Tony Alamo and Jack Chick. Alamo's is the ministry that distributes posters claiming that the Catholic Church owns all the major media—which, if true, would at least demonstrate that the Church is the worst-managed organization in the world, since it cannot even instruct its employees to write good copy about itself. Chick's is the outfit that publishes the *Alberto* comic books and pocket-sized booklets, also illustrated, that reveal secrets hidden even from Maria Monk. These two groups account for many column inches, but few conversions. They are the perfect bogeymen: frightening in visage, but essentially harmless. To be converted by them, one already has to be, mentally, a lost cause, the kind of person who would as likely support flat-Earthism or preach a diet of yak milk and powdered sparrow eggs.

More responsible, if that is the word, and certainly more effective, are groups such as the Conversion Center, Jimmy Swaggart Ministries, Christians Evangelizing Catholics, and Mission to Catholics International. Some have been around for decades and have seen themselves revived by the renewed interest in anti-Catholicism. Others rely on television and rake in a bundle, part of it, ironically enough, from Catholics. But most anti-Catholic organizations are small, confining their work to a single state or even to a single city. Of all the groups, large or small, Mission to Catholics has the greatest variety of literature for sale and is surely one of the most effective in producing conversions.

Bart Brewer's account of his conversion to fundamentalism appeared first in a tract, *The Conversion of a Catholic Priest*. It was expanded into *Pilgrimage from Rome*, published in 1982 by what is perhaps the leading anti-Catholic publisher, Bob Jones University Press. The book, although more complete than the tract, is less a self-revelation than a course in anti-Catholicism set in the first person.

Most people think Catholics convert to fundamentalism because they conclude the Church is too "liberal" dogmatically and that they convert to modernist religions or no religion because the Church is perceived to be too "conservative". Bart Brewer's conversion throws these notions for a loop. His conversion to a more "conservative" Christianity came about through what is generally regarded as a "liberal" motive: dislike of celibacy.

He was ordained in 1957, at age twenty-eight, at the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D. C. for the Discalced Carmelites.

Shortly thereafter he was assigned to the Philippines. There he promptly got involved romantically with a high school girl, and his bishop as promptly sent him packing for home. He left the Carmelites and became a secular priest, working in a parish in San Diego. “My psychological motivation for celibacy was decreasing rapidly”, he wrote.⁶ “I was not at all hesitant then [when Pope John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council] to be outspoken in my anticipation that the law of celibacy would be removed.” When it was not, “for the first time I doubted the authority of my church, not in religious pride, but in true sincerity”.

He admitted recognizing that “celibacy was not dogma but tradition and church law”, and he said that throughout his religious schooling (“four years of the prep, two years of the novitiate, three years of philosophy, and four years of theology”), “never once did I question one iota of Roman Catholic teaching”. It is a little hard to see how the Church’s refusal to change a mere disciplinary rule could result in Brewer’s doubting the authority of the Church—the wisdom of the Church’s leadership, perhaps, but its authority?

Sounding like a modernist shedding his Catholic past, Brewer “soon realized that to think and to reason on one’s own, without the help of Mother Church, was not sin”, although nowhere has he cited a Catholic authority that suggests thinking on one’s own is sinful. He found himself working in Long Beach as a Navy chaplain, going home each night to his mother’s apartment, where the two of them would listen to fundamentalist radio preachers. They “began to question teachings such as purgatory, the immaculate conception of Mary, the assumption of Mary, and the seven sacraments in the light of Scripture. The very last sacrament we were willing to relinquish in the light of Scripture was the Holy Eucharist”, which seems particularly odd since Fulton Sheen, no slouch on matters of conversion and unconversion, once remarked that, as a rule, the first thing to go is one’s belief in the Real Presence.

Brewer’s mother, then in her sixties, was secretly baptized in a Protestant church, not telling him so he would not rush his decision. But when his stint with the Navy was up shortly thereafter, they packed their bags and took off for San Francisco, with hardly a fare-thee-well to his bishop. His next task, he said, was to determine what the ultimate religious authority might be. He found his authority in the Bible.

It was in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, which he joined because his mother already had, that Brewer met his future wife. Only after he and Ruth

were married and he had served as pastor of an Adventist church for some time did he discover that the writings of Ellen G. White, the founder of the sect, were to be considered as inspired as the Bible. That, he said, was too much to take, so he resigned his pastorship. (He did not explain how he could have been an Adventist minister and not have known the status of Mrs. White's writings, just as it must be the rare Mormon elder who does not know the Book of Mormon is placed on a par with Scripture.)

He and Ruth, with their young son, returned to San Diego, where he decided to begin an organization that would help Catholics convert to fundamentalism. "I felt there was a real need for a church that would bridge the gap between Catholicism and Protestantism. Many felt uncomfortable or afraid of Protestant churches, but being a former priest, I believed, would help them feel more comfortable in leaving their church. I understood their frustration, I had faced their questions, I had experienced the same difficult decision to leave." He never did establish his own church; Mission to Catholics is a traveling ministry. Each weekend Brewer speaks at one or more Protestant churches, almost all of them Baptist, and solicits both financial aid and recruits. The recruits are trained in the techniques of distributing tracts and adroitly avoiding tough questions. (They routinely fall back on the line "let me ask my pastor".) Each week thousands of tracts are mailed out.

Most are written by Brewer himself. Others bear the names of other former priests, such as Mark Pena; Anthony Pezzotta; and L. H. Lehmann, author of *Out of the Labyrinth*. Bob Jones, chancellor of Bob Jones University, has his name on one Mission to Catholics tract, *The Church of Rome in Perspective*. It is a reprint of an article he wrote for a magazine, *Faith for the Family*, distributed by his school, and is perhaps the most ill-tempered tract published by Mission to Catholics. Its invective, only occasionally matched in Brewer's own writings, which are pointed enough, makes one wonder about the temptations one must undergo in a ministry such as this.

Jones begins by saying, "Pope Paul VI, archpriest of Satan, a deceiver and an antichrist, has, like Judas, gone to his own place." The tract goes downhill from there. At one point Jones attempts to raise the level of discussion, if only momentarily, by citing a diary kept by Bernard Berenson, the famous art collector and critic (who was, by the way, an Episcopalian). Here is what Jones says:

A pope must be an opportunist, a tyrant, a hypocrite, and a deceiver or he cannot be a pope. Bernard Berenson, in his *Rumor and Reflection* (a sort of notebook which he kept while hiding from the Germans in the hills above Florence during the Second World War), tells about the death of an early twentieth-century pope as described by his personal physician. When they came to give him the last rites, the pope ordered the priest and acolytes from the room, crying, "Get out of here. The comedy is over."

The gist, then, is that some unidentified Pope, knowing his end was at hand, acknowledged that his office and religion were jokes and that he had lived a he. Compare what Jones gives with what Berenson actually wrote:

Yesterday a friend was here, a Roman of good family, closely related to the late Cardinal Vannutelli and thus in touch with the Vatican, He told me that soon after the death of Pope Benedict XV, his own father was dying. A priest was called in, but the father refused to see him. Thinking to comfort the son, the priest said: "Don't take it hard. Such things will happen nowadays. Why, the late Holy Father on his deathbed sent away the priests with: 'Off with you, the play is over' " (*la commedia efinita*). His Holiness surely meant *commedia* as *divina*, Divine

Comedy like the title of Dante's masterpiece.⁷

The problem is not just that Jones did not report the words accurately or that he attributed the story to the Pope's physician. The problem is that he did not know (or care) what the Pope was referring to when he said *la commedia efinita*. If Jones were to read the *Divine Comedy*, he would be sorely disappointed to find in it no guffaws or rib-tickling jokes, and the reason is that the word "comedy" is used in a much older sense than the one having to do with humor. Berenson was right to translate *la commedia efinita* as "the play is over". Another way to put it might be "the drama of my life is over", which is hardly the confession of duplicity Jones wishes us to think the Pope made.

To what extent has Bart Brewer allowed himself to become like some of the people with whom he rubs shoulders? In private discussions he is invariably polite, and in his writings and in public talks he professes love for individual Catholics, yet he collaborates with people such as Bob Jones, who is unable to make the same claim with a straight face. The influence of such people shows. *Challenger* contains innumerable misrepresentations of Catholic doctrines and history, and Brewer's penchant for them no doubt comes from his imprudence in his choice of accomplices, who care little about accuracy. Apparently he works on the principle that the enemy of my enemy is my friend, but that is courting danger. He should keep in mind C. S. Lewis' remark that when supping with the devil, one needs to use a long

spoon.⁸

Brewer has made the same mistake Loraine Boettner made when he wrote *Roman Catholicism*. Boettner relied heavily on professional anti-Catholics such as Lehmann, Charles Chiniquy (a nineteenth-century sensationalist every bit as reliable as Maria Monk), and Paul Blanshard. Now Blanshard, the chief anti-Catholic writer of a generation ago, was not even a Christian—in fact, he was a secular humanist—yet Boettner had no qualms about quarrying his work for rocks to throw at the Church. The claim of leading fundamentalists that their attacks on the Catholic religion are made out of love for individual Catholics loses much of its credibility because they are unwilling to decline the use of unfair tactics. One might say they are unwilling to wage a just war; they want to do battle, and they do not hesitate to use any weapon at hand, no matter how foul.

In a way, of course, this is good, since much of what they write unintentionally repels. It is difficult for an informed Catholic who studies anti-Catholic literature to refrain from saying, “Here, let *me* do it! I can present your case more convincingly than you can.” Still, there are the numbers. However ineptly the fundamentalist position may be expressed, it draws each year thousands of Catholics out of the Church, and it makes that many more workers for the anti-Catholic movement. No matter how many people shut their minds to fundamentalism because of excesses by fundamentalist writers, countless others embrace that form of Christianity because what they read convinces them of its truth. At the least, they find anti-Catholics writing about issues that seem to matter, that affect their salvation—issues usually ignored by Catholic writers and the diocesan press.

This may account for the popularity of *Challenger*. Typeset on a microcomputer, it is printed on a single sheet of paper folded once to make a four-page self-mailer. It carries no illustrations, other than an occasional reproduction of the cover of *Pilgrimage from Rome*. The front page is usually written by Brewer and features essays on topics such as “Catholics and the Bible”, “The Wealth of Rome”, “Biblical Christians Will Leave Romanism”, and “Is There a Mediatrix?” This is the preachy page.

The second page is always a testimonial from “another ex-Catholic for biblical Christianity”. Stories are given by men and women, young and old. They speak of rather sudden conversions—not generally as quick as the one on the Damascus Road, perhaps, but nothing remotely like the drawn-out process undergone by converts to Catholicism such as John Henry Newman,

Arnold Lunn, or, more recently, Sheldon Vanauken and Thomas Howard. Consider representative examples.

Joanne Diriam⁹ said she had visited the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. “I had been reading about the Pope being in South America. . . . All of a sudden, I could not understand why the ‘poor people’ had to support a church that was obviously extremely rich!. . . I knew that I could no longer be Catholic.” Her explanation makes one think of a story told by Fulton Sheen.¹⁰ He had been giving a retreat to priests, and one of the younger priests asked him during one of his talks why the Church did not liquidate its holdings, sell off the ornaments and artwork, and give everything to the poor. The young man was rather insistent, and he came up to Sheen later and made the same point. Sheen looked at him closely and asked, “How much did you steal?” “What?” was the reply. “How much did you steal?” repeated Sheen. Then the young priest told the truth. He had been stealing from the collection basket, and he justified his acts by saying the Church was too wealthy anyway and could afford the loss.

Joanne Diriam let the cat out of her bag in an aside, noting that when the Pope was in South America, “he had reprimanded those very poor people regarding birth control”. If Sheen were here, he would probably trace her conversion to her dislike of the Church’s position on contraception, her concern being not so much the foreign poor’s access to the pill, but her own. No one, he might say, could be so ignorant of the Church’s temporal condition that the discovery of the existence of a finely ornamented church would trigger an instantaneous conversion. Complaints about the alleged wealth of the Church are always excuses for something else.

Like the others who have decided to “tell all”, Norman Nichols¹¹ was raised a Catholic. When he was about thirty, his “born-again” Baptist roommate convinced him to visit a Baptist church. His landlady, also a Baptist, had been pushing him to go for some time, and he regularly told her no, but he felt he could not refuse his friend. He went and was so moved that he responded to the altar call. “I never did go back to the Roman Catholic Church.” This was a man who claimed to have been well instructed as a Catholic and who said he regularly practiced his religion.

Larry Wise¹² was twenty-eight when he converted. As a Catholic, he had never once read the Bible, but he did read Hal Lindsey’s *Late Great Planet Earth*, and he watched Jack Van Impe on television. He decided to go on one of Van Impe’s Holy Land tours and while on it received an anti-Catholic

tract. When he returned home and went to Mass, “I saw the statues, I remembered the verses: ‘Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven images’ (Ex. 20:4). Then I thought of the Rosary and remembered another verse: ‘For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus’ (1 Tim 2:5). As I sat watching the priest I remembered other verses: ‘A bishop (pastor) must be blameless, the husband of one wife. . . .’ (1 Tim, 3:1-5); ‘Call no man your father upon the earth; for one is your Father, which is in heaven’ (Matt. 23:9).” More verses came to mind (his short tour of the Holy Land apparently having been a cram course in New Testament memorization), and he quickly concluded that he “could no longer participate in a church where the teachings are so contrary to what the Bible teaches”. Like the others, he un-poped.

The third page of each *Challenger* the correspondence page, is devoted to short testimonials and notes of thanks.¹³ No names are given for the writers, only the states of residence. One writer complained that “this area has many wicked ways of life like drinking, dancing, and gambling. The priest usually takes part in these things and doesn’t tell the poor, uninformed people the truth.” Another said, “I have already won my boss and hopefully my brother in St. Louis with the tracts you sent.” A New Yorker wrote, “As of today I am no longer a Catholic. I have been reading the Bible for the last three years, and then a friend gave me *Scriptural Truths for Roman Catholics*, [a tract] from your organization. I would like as many as possible to pass along.” Many people write about trying to convince their spouses or children to convert. One man, reporting success, said, “I was a Catholic for 45 years. My wife and five children have all been saved.” Another reported that “I am an ex-Catholic, now newly born-again, and am encountering much hostility from my family. I need a lot of prayers and help in ministering and witnessing to them.” Some report even bringing their aged parents into fundamentalism.

The fourth page of *Challenger* often sports an ad for *Pilgrimage from Rome* (“one copy: \$6.50; ten copies: \$44.00”) and a list of Brewer’s scheduled talks—one or two each weekend, others during the week, generally at Baptist churches. The list demonstrates that Brewer’s ministry extends across the country, even across the Atlantic—he undertook his first, extensive speaking tour of Europe in 1986. He is constantly on the move, preaching, for instance, at thirteen churches in New York State in one month.¹⁴

This last page of the newsletter also includes requests for prayers, usually

for financial assistance or for the conversion of some straggler. Not all the prayers have been answered in the way desired. In 1981 Mission to Catholics started a daily, fifteen-minute radio program called “Contend for the Faith”, with Brewer as the principal speaker. It was aired first on a station in San Diego, and there were plans to expand into other markets. In a much-ballyhooed campaign, subscribers to *Challenger* anted up ten thousand dollars to get the program started and were asked to pray for its expansion. But contributions from listeners could not meet costs, and the original kitty was quickly depleted. In short order the schedule was cut to Saturdays only. Even that was too expensive, and the program was finally, and quietly, canceled.

Challenger goes out, of course, mainly to committed fundamentalists, some of whom are themselves converts from Catholicism, some of whom are hereditary anti-Catholics. The publication keeps people informed about the work of the organization and provides them, over a period of years, with a fairly complete apologetics course, at least regarding anti-Catholicism.

It is not the newsletter, though, that convinces people to jump ship, to leave the Barque of Peter at fundamentalism’s siren call. That task is left to Mission to Catholics’ books and tapes, but mainly to its many tracts, dozens of them. They are divided into four groups: testimonies of former priests (including one by Brewer himself and one by Charles Chiniquy); testimonies of former nuns (such as *Ex-Nun Finds Peace with God*); testimonies of former Catholic laymen (the Bible being one woman’s *Passport to Freedom*); and miscellaneous tracts, most of them on particular Catholic doctrines or practices. Far and away the most popular tract, if encomiums printed in *Challenger* are any indication, is Brewer’s *Scriptural Truths for Roman Catholics*. Nearly four thousand words of small type, it is the kind of screed that can confuse Catholics right out of the Church—and it has been quite successful in doing just that.

The first section is titled “The True Church”. It tries to demonstrate that it was not Peter but Christ who was the rock mentioned in Matthew 16:18. Brewer rests his argument on an examination of the Greek, a tactic that usually works when his Catholic reader knows no Greek and is not aware the first Gospel was composed in Aramaic, the language Christ spoke. In fact, the argument Brewer makes, if applied to the Aramaic and not just the Greek, actually backfires against him, but he does not let the reader in on that secret. The question of “what the Greek says” is frequently brought up by

fundamentalists. Anti-Catholics, who often know little Greek themselves, are able to make hay with it only because most Catholics know still less.

The next section is on the papacy. Brewer cites some titles given to the Pope, such as “Holy Father”, and, without giving any sources, some claims allegedly made by recent Popes, claims that, taken out of historical context and only a few words at a time, seem rather suspicious to those new to ecclesiastical history. He then lists a few verses of Scripture, such as “Call no one on earth your father” (Mt 23:9) and “Is there a God besides me?” (Is 44:8), the latter given to show, apparently, that the Pope is not divine.

Following this is a short consideration of the priesthood, consisting mainly of highly selective quotations from the Bible. The gist is that only Christ is a priest under the New Dispensation; the Catholic priesthood was foisted on the Church by Cyprian of Carthage and “was part of the merger of paganism with Christianity”. Naturally enough, no look at the priesthood is complete without an excoriation of the Mass.

The fundamentalist understanding, or misunderstanding, is that Catholics believe Christ dies anew at each Mass. This violates Hebrews 7:27, “He died once for all”, and half a dozen other verses in that book, says Brewer. Then he turns to the Real Presence, which he considers to be at best a real symbolism. Again the reader is given a short course in Greek. “When Jesus said, ‘This is my body’ or ‘blood’, He did not ‘change’ the substance, but was explaining that He is the one ‘represented’ by the passover bread and wine. Jesus did not say *touto gignetai*, this has become or is turned into, but *touto esti*, which can only mean this represents or stands for.”

This is a blunder. True, *touto gignetai* means “this has become”, and, true, the sacred text does not read *touto gignetai*, but which Catholic claimed it does? When it comes to the meaning of *touto esti*, which is indeed found in the text, Brewer has things backward. As any Greek dictionary will show, *esti* is simply the verb “to be”. It means “is”. It means “represents” only secondarily, just as “is” in English can mean “represents”, but usually does not. The plain, the literal, reading of *touto esti* is “this is”.¹⁵

Scriptural Truths for Roman Catholics, having misapplied elementary Greek, then looks at confession, the sacrament of penance, and justification. The reader discovers that no man has been empowered by Christ to forgive sins: “Who can forgive sins, but only God?” (Mk 2:7). He also learns not to confess to a priest: “Repent. . . and pray to god” (Acts 8:22). Deprecated is the Church’s appeal to John 20:22-23: “Receive the Holy Spirit; when you

forgive men's sins, they are forgiven, when you hold them bound, they are held bound." Brewer makes the standard argument that this was not a grant of a power to forgive sins, but to preach repentance, even though that flies in the face of the plain words of the text and the understanding of all the early Fathers of the Church. When considering justification, he argues salvation by faith alone and quotes fourteen biblical verses to buttress his case, but conveniently makes no reference to James 2:24: "You see, then, that it takes deeds as well as faith if a man is to be justified. "This tract makes no effort, on this or any other topic, to present the Catholic side or to deal with the weaknesses in its own argument.

Then comes the juiciest part of the tract, a section labelled "Roman Catholic Inventions", a list of forty-four beliefs or customs supposedly borrowed from paganism or created *ex nihilo*. Each item includes an approximate date of first belief or use. The list was taken, without attribution, from the first chapter of Loraine Boettner's *Roman Catholicism*. Almost none of the forty-four items are mentioned in other tracts from *Mission to Catholics*. What the reader thus is left with, in most cases, is a short statement consisting of no more than eight or ten words—and, of course, an uneasy feeling. These "inventions" are given not to present the reader with a complete syllogism, but to leave him with suspicions. Pile up enough innuendos, and one has what appears to be a convincing case against the Church.

This list is partly reincarnated in another *Mission to Catholics* tract, *Can a Christian Remain a Roman Catholic?* The author, John Phillips, claims that "Rome did not arrive at its dogmatic positions hastily or lightly. She is the product of many centuries of gradual departure from the true faith of the Church found in the word of God." More than thirty of the other tract's "Catholic Inventions" are then reproduced. "This is Rome", says Phillips. "These are the dogmas we associate with Rome. They are un-scriptural. All of them are the very antithesis of New Testament doctrine."

One blind spot that afflicts all professional anti-Catholics is the difference between doctrines and practices. That Christ rose from the dead is a doctrine; that Catholics are to abstain from meat on Good Friday is a practice, a disciplinary measure only. There is nothing doctrinal about the latter: it is not a belief, but a custom, and it can be altered as circumstances warrant. It is one thing to allege that some of Christianity's original doctrines have been dropped and non-Christian doctrines adopted. That, if demonstrated, would

show the Catholic Church is defectible, that it is not really the institution founded by Christ. But to argue that the Catholic Church cannot be the one founded by him because, say, “priests began to assume distinctive robes in A.D. 500” is to rest one’s apologetics on a basic confusion. No one, not even a fundamentalist, can argue rationally that the Church today should appear, even in all outward respects, just like the Church of apostolic times. If fundamentalists were clear in their own minds about the distinction between doctrines and practices, they would not bother arguing about the latter, because they would realize the knife cuts both ways.

Even when it comes to purely doctrinal matters, they are confused. On the one hand they seem to think there could be no proper development of doctrines as Catholics understand the term, no deeper understanding of them as centuries pass. Frank Sheed noted that one cannot stop people from drawing true inferences from true doctrines.¹⁶ If “This is my body”, for instance, then certain things logically follow regarding the Eucharist. On the other hand, fundamentalists are not averse to their own brand of doctrinal development; they too believe things that are not found on the face of Scripture. There are peculiarly fundamentalist doctrines that find no warrant in Scripture and that should, by the fundamentalists’ own rationale, be thrown out. Such difficulties are never discussed in literature from organizations such as Mission to Catholics because they are not perceived to exist. Professional anti-Catholics take the fundamentalist position as a given, the Catholic position as a usurpation, and their chief concern is to undermine the latter, not to justify the former.

Chapter 4

Old-Time Religion, Old-Time Tactics

One might surmise a religious tract titled *From Voodooism and Roman Catholicism to the Living Saviour* would be written by George Bush, popularizer of voodoo economics. Not so. The author, Clarence Ismey, is a Haitian, a onetime Catholic and (simultaneously, he says) voodooist who was converted to fundamentalism through the persistence of an illiterate man who had memorized dozens of Bible verses and recited them, one after another, until Ismey's defenses were breached. It took only one day.

Ismey claims he was promptly ostracized by his family and moved to Port-Au-Prince, where he was befriended by other Protestants. He attended a fundamentalist seminary, where he decided he was called to minister to the hundred thousand Haitians living in New York City. There he works as an associate of the Conversion Center, one of the oldest anti-Catholic groups in the country.

The name of this organization is wonderfully neutral, giving no hint what people are supposed to convert from or to, but it does not take long to see that the sole purpose of the group is to transform Catholics into fundamentalists. This is clear from an examination of its price list. The three dozen tracts available for purchase have titles such as *The Confusion of the Popes*, *The Roman Catholic Bible Says*, *Roman Catholic Articles of Faith*, *Transubstantiation*, and *The Mass—Sacrifice or Sacrilege?* Books for sale include *Catholicism against Itself*, *You Can Lead Roman Catholics to Christ*, *Secrets of Romanism*, and *Letters to a Roman Catholic Priest*. Also on the list are perennial favorites such as *Fifty Years in the Church of Rome*, by Charles Chiniquy, whose nineteenth-century horror stories still sell; *The Two Babylons*, written in 1853 by Alexander Hislop, who claimed Catholicism arose from ancient Babylonian cults; and *Roman Catholicism*, by Loraine Boettner, godfather of the modern anti-Catholic movement.

The Conversion Center, which had its “international headquarters” (in fact, its only office) in Havertown, Pennsylvania, and is now located in Newtown

Square, was founded by the late Alex O. Dunlap, who, with four other onetime trustees, is said to be “at home with the Lord—Rev. 14:13”. The present head of the group is the Rev. Donald F. Maconaghie, who lists himself as acting director. A pithy description of the group is given on the masthead of each issue of its newsletter: “A fundamental Faith Mission, Home & Foreign, offering spiritual and temporal help to Roman Catholic priests, nuns, and ‘whosoever will’ ”, The ostensible targets of the Conversion Center’s ministrations are thus priests and religious, but most of the tracts and books end up being thrust into the hands of Catholic laymen.

On the whole, the Conversion Center seems to be a smaller operation than Mission to Catholics, but a reasonably influential one, since it makes some effort to concentrate its energies toward a subset of Catholics. Its principals must have some concern about continuity, though. Photographs of the annual meeting show a modest crowd in a small Baptist church, and the leaders of the organization, like a disproportionate number of people in the pews, are mainly elderly.

The Conversion Center’s newsletter, which appears irregularly and carries less copy than Mission to Catholics’ *Challenger*, offers some interesting viewpoints. The March 1984 issue, for instance, was devoted to the topic “Is Mary the ‘Mother of God’?” The author, as is usually the case, was Maconaghie. He starts this way: “After being practically beaten to death in the Republic of Ireland for preaching the Gospel,¹ I was made very sick in the hospital by being forced to listen to ‘prayers’ said by the nursing sister. Most of these prayers were to Mary, ‘the Mother of God’ ”.

Maconaghie says Mary cannot be the Mother of God because that would make her mother, Anne, the grandmother of God. “Likewise, James, the brother of our Lord, would be the brother of God. David would be the forefather of God.” The promoter of the notion of *Theotokos* (God-bearer) “was an unscrupulous bishop of Egypt, Cyril, who was promptly anathematized for his new and idolatrous doctrine by the most prominent bishop of his day, Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople”. At the Council of Ephesus, “Cyril ganged up on Nestorius, and by blackmail and bribery (fairly admitted in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*) the ‘Mother of God’ controversy was settled in favor of Cyril. Consequently Cyril has been pronounced a ‘saint’ and Nestorius a ‘heretic’.”

So where did this notion of *Theotokos* come from? asks Maconaghie. From Egypt, of course, where Isis, “the Egyptian madonna”, carried “her little ‘sun-

god', Horus, in her arms" and where "the worship of Seb, 'the father of the gods,' was supplanted by this 'mother-goddess' ". Get it? Isis was worshiped instead of Seb; Mary is worshiped instead of the Father.

(This issue of the newsletter ends, by the way, with a paragraph in praise of Bart Brewer, head of Mission to Catholics International, with whom Maconaghie "had the joy of visiting Mexico and sharing the Gospel with the people there". In fact, several of the Conversion Center's tracts have been reprinted by Mission to Catholics under its own name.)

There are interesting reports given by Maconaghie in the following issue. Under a large headline reading "CONVERSION CENTER LEADER DEBATES THEOLOGIAN IN VATICAN" is a short article, most of which concerns a 1963 visit by Maconaghie to Rome. Then he says, "A few weeks ago I again visited Rome. This time I was invited by a high member of the Vatican Hierarchy. I entered with an official pass, duly issued by the Vatican bureaucracy. There in the 'Holy' See I debated point by point the doctrines of our precious Lord for four solid hours with a Vatican theologian."

That's it. From the headline one might imagine Maconaghie squaring off against Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, but he gives no hint concerning the identities of the "high member of the Vatican Hierarchy" who invited him or of the "Vatican theologian" with whom he "debated". He does say later that he had a long discussion with an archbishop. Is this the man who invited him, or the man he debated with, or did he merely exchange the usual courtesies with a visiting American prelate? The impression given the fundamentalist reader, no doubt, is that Maconaghie was in Rome doing what Hus or Luther did, putting the Vatican know-nothings in their places.

The August / September 1986 issue of the Conversion Center's newsletter features a peculiar "Dear Friend" letter from Maconaghie. It begins this way:

Cardinal Newman came perhaps the nearest of anyone in explaining how the Roman Catholic Church has so completely betrayed the message of the Christian Gospel. I think he was endeavouring to be as charitable as possible when he attributed the great betrayal to actual possession of the Church of Rome by an evil spirit. In his book *[An Essay on] The Development of Christian Doctrine* (page 6) he says, "The spirit of Rome has risen again in its former place, and has evidenced its identity by its works. It has possessed the church there planted as an evil spirit might seize the demoniacs of primitive times, and makes her speak words which are not her own. In the corrupt Papal System we have the very cruelty, the craft and the ambition of the Roman Republic, its cruelty in its unsparing sacrifice of the happiness and virtue of individuals to a phantom of public expediency, inks forced celibacy within, and its persecutions without; its craft in its falsehoods, its deceitful deeds and lying wonders; and its grasping ambition in the very structure of its policy, in its assumption of universal dominion: but it still claims the sovereignty under pretense. The Roman Catholic Church I will not blame, but pity—she is in

thralldom.”

Maconaghie continues by saying of Newman,

He masterfully enumerates the perversions that have resulted from this demoniacal possession very concisely as follows: “She virtually substitutes an external ritual for moral obedience, penance for penitence, confession for sorrow, profession for faith, the lips for the heart.” Cardinal Newman was, of course, only one of many religious leaders who has warned us of this evil which has possessed the corrupt Papal System. Among them are the founders of the Methodist, the Presbyterian and the Lutheran churches [that is, John Wesley, John Knox, and Martin Luther].

The impression given by Maconaghie is that Newman, when a prince of the Church, condemned the “papal system”—and this in his most important book.

There are several things wrong with these quotations. For one thing, without letting the reader in on it, Maconaghie has dropped some phrases, added one word, and changed another word.² The meaning of the passages is changed slightly from what Newman actually wrote. His words are made to seem harsher than they were. This sleight of hand can be overlooked because it is minor compared to the real problem.

The real problem is that these words from Newman, which appear at the beginning of his book in what he labels an “Advertisement”, do *not* give his views at the time of writing. Quite the contrary. They are quotations from earlier writings, and he here specifically *retracts* them. He is saying these judgments, made when he was a Protestant, were *wrong*. Yet Maconaghie would have us think these are “Cardinal” Newman’s present opinions, the notions with which he went to his grave.

The passages being retracted were written in 1834, when Newman was thirty-three. As a young Anglican minister, he had been anti-Roman, as most in his circle were. But he learned much over the next eleven years, and when he wrote the “Advertisement”, which is dated October 6, 1845, he was convinced his earlier views were incorrect, that he had been operating from mere prejudice. In fact, just after Newman completed *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, he became a Catholic. He was, at his conversion, a layman—not a priest, certainly not a cardinal. He was not raised to the cardinalate until 1879, thirty-four years later.

So Maconaghie is triply wrong—wrong in the quotations, which he adulterates; wrong in their import, which he misrepresents; wrong in

Newman's status, which he misunderstands.

This is a good example of the way fundamentalist opponents of the Church bend facts to the snapping point. Little printed by professional anti-Catholics—those who make their living by attacking “Romanism”—can be taken at face value. The reader cannot assume blithely all is on the up and up. Nearly every paragraph requires an investigation, but who has time for that? Worse, how many suspect an investigation is even needed? Not many, of course, which is why writings like Maconaghie's do so much harm and, for the most part, go unchallenged.

A curious thing about the Conversion Center's newsletters is that most of the photographs of things Catholic are at least forty years old. Shown have been a priest giving an anointing in a hospital room where the patient's bed might have been used for those wounded at Verdun; another priest, in a grainy photo, celebrating a Tridentine Mass; Communion being given to servicemen wearing World War II uniforms; and a seminarian using a typewriter that Barry Fitzgerald might have brought to the set of his movies with Bing Crosby.³

The picture of the seminarian appears with the title “Seminarians Need Help!” The help needed, of course, is not the kind the Vatican might desire. Maconaghie prints portions of a letter from a young man studying—God knows why—for the priesthood: “Within a year I can be ordained a priest . . . but my convictions are against the Catholic church. In fact, I've come to know of the falsehood of the R.C. church. There are a lot of practices and beliefs in the R.C. church which are irrational, absurd, and unbiblical. To mention a few: infallibility of the pope, immaculate conception, Marian devotion and devotion to saints. . . . I feel that the Spirit of the Lord is leading me out of the Catholic church. I have been reading your esteemed publication and am convinced that the Baptist church is the true church of the Lord. Can I too become a Baptist pastor?”

In a sidebar is another letter. The name of the writer and his seminary have been deleted. He says, “I have been praying for the success of all your works for the propagation of the Gospel message. I feel that the Lord is calling me too, to join you and render humble service.” He then asks Maconaghie's help in getting admitted to a fundamentalist school of theology.

These letters sound so bizarre that they might be no more authentic than the Hitler diaries, but they are probably legitimate. Considering the state of seminaries today, there is no reason why incipient fundamentalists cannot be

found in them alongside incipient agnostics, though it does seem odd that young men convinced the Catholic Church is the Whore of Babylon, as the Conversion Center regularly states, would not leap from the fire at the first opportunity.

The newsletters are not the only bizarre things distributed by the Conversion Center. Some of its tracts are a bit odd. Consider one called *10 Reasons Why I Am Not a Roman Catholic*. The first point, given in full, reads like this:

1. THE PAPACY IS A HOAX. Peter never claimed to be pope. He was never in Rome. He knew that Jesus Christ, not himself, was the “Rock”. It is written, “Call no one on earth your Father; for one is your Father, who is in heaven” Mt 23:9.

How does one answer this? The effort required to respond to these four sentences is so disproportionate to their length—it would take several pages to give a complete answer⁴—that even people who know why these remarks are wrong would be tempted to find refuge in T. S. Eliot’s line: “What have we to do but stand with empty hands and palms turned upwards?”⁵ The temptation is to do nothing, to make no response, but that lets anti-Catholics win the skirmish by default. It must be admitted they enjoy a certain tactical (if short-term) advantage in that they can get away with presenting bare-bones claims such as these; they wear out Catholicism’s defenders by inundating them with short remarks that demand long explanations.

Other points in this tract are similarly terse. The next two are:

2. MARYOLATRY [*sic*] IS A HOAX. It is written of Christ, “Neither is there salvation in any other name. For there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” Acts 4:12.

3. PURGATORY IS A HOAX. It is a money-making scheme. It is written, “The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses us from All sin” 1 John 1:7.

The penultimate point reveals that the tract is outdated:

9. I AM AN AMERICAN CITIZEN, and refuse to be the subject of a deluded Italian Prince. It is written, “No man can serve two masters” Mt 6:24.

The Conversion Center also distributes a card titled *10 Reasons Why I Drink*. It is the kind of thing one pulls out of a shirt pocket and offers along with a business card. The first of the ten reasons is, “I love to vomit.” The last reads, “It’s my way of obeying God, Who says, ‘Wine is a mocker, strong drink is

raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.’ Proverbs 20:1.” The Conversion Center, like most fundamentalist groups, opposes the drinking of wine, no exceptions. No search of anti-Catholic writings, no matter how thorough, will reveal any discussion of the use of wine versus the misuse of wine. The drink Hilaire Belloc praised in his most famous poem is off limits for fundamentalists.⁶ This stricture puts even the casual reader of the Bible in an awkward spot, since Christ first displayed his miraculous powers by turning water into wine at Cana, and he used wine at the Last Supper. Surely he did not disapprove of its use, as distinguished from its abuse. Some fundamentalists try to explain away such awkwardness (by saying, for example, that the drink at the Last Supper was unfermented grape juice, not wine), but most simply ignore the problem. Far better to turn to more profitable endeavors—such as American history.

The Conversion Center publishes a small leaflet bearing Abraham Lincoln’s likeness. It is called *Lincoln’s Warning*. Credit is given to Charles Chiniquy’s *Fifty Years in the Church of Rome*. The reader learns that Lincoln said: “The priests, the nuns and monks, who daily land on our shores under the pretext of teaching their religion. . . are nothing else than emissaries of the pope, to undermine our institutions . . . and prepare a reign of anarchy here as they have done in Ireland, in Spain, and wherever there are people that want to be free.”

Those who do not realize it was the Catholics of Ireland, rather than the English colonizers of Ireland, who initiated the trouble there can learn the sixteenth president thought “papists” a positive danger to the Republic: “Till lately I was in favor of the unlimited liberty of conscience, as our Constitution gives it to the Roman Catholics. But now it seems to me that, sooner or later, the people will be forced to put an amendment to that clause toward the papists. Is it right to give the privilege of citizenship to men who are the sworn and public enemies (No. 1) of our Constitution, our laws, our liberties, and our lives?. . . I am for liberty of conscience in its noblest, broadest, highest sense. But I cannot give liberty of conscience to the pope or his followers, the papists, so long as they tell me that their conscience orders them to burn my wife, strangle my children, and cut my throat when they find* the opportunity.” The asterisk refers to a footnote, which says “Lincoln was finally assassinated April 14, 1865, by Roman Catholics.”

If an experiment in historiography is in order, one might ask the people at the Conversion Center, who apparently believe Lincoln wrote these lines, just

where in his collected letters, speeches, or official documents they can be found. Lincoln was not one to make idle charges; if Catholics told him they were bound in conscience to burn his wife, strangle his children, and cut his throat, he no doubt left posterity details of just who informed him of this curious obligation. Searching his writings might be fruitless, though; the clue is that the expression “public enemy” came into vogue only in the 1920s.

Chapter 5

Bringing Catholics to Real Christianity

Although Bill Jackson's ministry, Christians Evangelizing Catholics, is small, he is in considerable demand on the fundamentalist lecture circuit, and the reports of his tours in his newsletter show that he puts on plenty of miles. He may speak in several states in a month, and in 1985 he even took his message to Ireland, where he spent seventeen years as a minister, and to England. The newsletter is sent from his San Jose, California, home to about eight hundred names, but the number belies Jackson's influence. Many of the names are of ministers or of leaders of similar organizations. Through one name might come a talk to hundreds of people, or a single acquaintance might arrange for Jackson to speak at several churches, multiplying his effectiveness.

Jackson shares with his readers news about his children and their spiritual maturation, asking, in one issue,¹ for prayers for his son Dave, who "has come back to the Lord" and who thinks "the Lord has other things He wants him to do with his life" than lay carpets, which Dave finds "physically difficult to continue". The other children are more established. Bill, Jr., and his wife live in New York City; Colleen and her family are in the San Joaquin Valley; and Mark is in Chicago, studying at the Moody Bible Institute, perhaps to join his father in convincing Catholics to leave the Church while there is still time. Also studying, readers are told, are "four Roman Catholics who have been saved through taking the 'Treasures in Your Catholic Bible' study course. . . .I met one of them recently, and he needs your prayer for his Roman Catholic wife." The study course is printed by Tabernacle Pres of Louisville, Kentucky, the firm that prints Jackson's tracts (twelve so far, soon more) and booklets (four), which he distributes "on a free will offering basis".

In his newsletter Jackson does more than recount his family's version of the Pilgrim's Progress, of course. He gives practical examples of what can be done by one person to bring Catholics into real Christianity. He called one article "Use Your Local Priest".² In it he explained that he at one time

worked with a telephone ministry organized by a Baptist church in San Francisco. “We used a business directory and made random calls to certain areas.” One night he called St. Mary’s Catholic Church. A layman answered, and Jackson asked him about “the assurance of salvation”. The layman, stumped, went for the priest. “Needless to say,” said Jackson, “the priest didn’t know anything more about salvation than the layman had, but, during our conversation, he specifically told me he did not have assurance of salvation. From that time on, whenever I telephoned a person who identified themselves *[sic]* as a Roman Catholic, I could say, ‘I talked to one of your priests the other day. He said he wasn’t sure of going to heaven, but my Bible says that we can know.’ I would then quote 1 John 5:13 and found this a very good way to initiate a gospel presentation.”

This can, indeed, be a good means to effect conversions. Another way is to march right up and accost a priest. “You might visit the priest and find him unwilling to talk, as a Baptist pastor and I experienced recently. When we knocked on his door and introduced ourselves, he said, ‘I am a busy person. No one gets to see me without an appointment. This is one of the rudest things I ever saw, your just coming here and expecting to talk to me.’ (These are not his verbatim words, but the jest *[sic]* of what he said to us.) If you run across this, excuse yourself politely and then call to make an appointment with him.”

Appointments can be revelatory; good use can be made of priestly ignorance thus exposed. “Sometimes the very lack of positive doctrinal standing by a priest can be used in evangelism. We often quote the priest we met last year in Dayton, who was very difficult to corner, but who finally joined a conversation we were having with a Catholic lady theologian. We asked him if the Bible was the word of God, if he was sure of salvation, if the Mass was a sacrifice—and all he could do was to uneasily shift from one foot to another and say, ‘I don’t know.’ ” Is it any wonder, with examples like these, that Jackson writes that “it has been said that an educated Catholic must cut off his head and leave it outside when he goes to church?” An irresolute priest invites precisely this kind of abuse.

Jackson calls himself not prolife but pro-eternal life. One of his tracts³ advises fundamentalist prolife workers to “realize your responsibility to the child you saved from abortion” by converting the parents to fundamentalism. “The greatest thing that can happen is for the mother to be evangelized and saved. Recently I met a young lady who, when unsaved, was planning an

abortion. She was contacted by Christians who persuaded her to keep her baby and who led her to the Lord. Later, the father was also saved. So instead of three lives—one wrecked, one murdered, and one unsaved—we have a Christian family with a positive testimony of God’s grace.” It is hard to fault Jackson’s logic here; he has, in this regard, a better appreciation of what is needed than do many Catholic proliferers who are satisfied just to halt abortions. However great a triumph it is to have one more life spared, stopping there is not enough. To do so is to ignore the deeper causes of the abortion mentality, which is necessarily a secularist and irreligious mentality.

Catholics, who for so many years carried on the prolife battle seemingly alone, now sometimes express annoyance that fundamentalists, who have more recently become active in the movement, seem unable to restrain themselves from evangelizing during strategy sessions. It is one thing, these Catholics think, to save babies, quite another to seek conversions among movement members. They would not be so annoyed if they perceived that the fundamentalists are perhaps being more consistent than they are and perhaps have a keener appreciation that abortion is as much a problem of the soul as a problem of the scalpel.

Aside from the newsletter, which preaches to the converted, Jackson produces tracts. One is titled *Is Roman Catholicism a Cult?* When Catholics think of cults, they think of the Hare Krishnas, the Moonies, the Scientologists. They find it hard to imagine that some Protestants think of the Catholic religion as a cult. But among fundamentalists, this is taken for granted and is a matter of keen concern. “Very likely”, Jackson writes, “this is the most often asked question when I minister regarding Roman Catholic evangelism.” Catholics are naturally offended at being called cultists, at least in the sense the fundamentalists mean to use the term.⁴

As in so many matters, fundamentalists and Catholics are at loggerheads because they define terms differently. Jackson explains fundamentalists’ peculiar definition: “The word, as generally used by the Lord’s people today, means some kind of false religion, especially one that denies the basic truths of Christianity. We may get a consensus of opinion [among fundamentalists] that would state a cult is a religion that does not believe in basic Christian truths and is always characterized by a denial of the uniqueness of biblical revelation and a salvation at least partially dependent on the works and merits of its adherents.” In other words, a cult is any religion that is not fundamentalism.

Granted, this is not a particularly helpful definition, but there is some sense to it. For the man who believes in fundamentalism, any other religion is necessarily erroneous. The Catholic Church adopts a similar perspective in acknowledging that every religion other than the Catholic is to some extent erroneous. But the Church differs in approach from fundamentalism in that it always (and not just since Vatican II) has been willing to acknowledge that other religions contain greater or lesser degrees of truth, depending on how much they mirror Catholicism. Eastern Orthodoxy is truer than, say, high-church Anglicanism, which is truer than Presbyterianism, which is truer than Unitarianism. Few fundamentalists are willing to be so generous. One is either a fundamentalist or damned, and, if damned, it does not much matter how close to heaven's gate one might be, because outside is still outside.

Jackson lumps the Catholic Church with the cults because "Roman Catholics have added to the Bible. They have no means of solid interpretation. Their present attitude toward its inerrancy is thoroughly liberal, and they have through the years been vocal in condemning God's Word. The Bible was placed on the Index of Forbidden Books—they will now tell you that was only because of erroneous Protestant translations—but it was first placed there in 1229, over 100 years before Wycliffe's first translation,"

These sentences contain some of the chief fundamentalist objections to Catholicism. Note that Jackson says the Church provides no means for "solid interpretation". At first this seems laughable coming from someone who dismisses any authority other than himself in interpreting Scripture. The individual is the least solid of all interpreters, which is precisely why Protestantism has been fissiparous. Jackson is more on target in saying the Catholic attitude toward inerrancy is "thoroughly liberal". This is his perception of the disarray in Catholic exegesis over the last twenty years. To him it appears the historico-critical method and its "assured results" are fully indicative of the official Catholic position on the Bible. Then he claims the Church had been "vocal in condemning God's Word" by placing the Bible on the Index of Forbidden Books in 1229. Of course, the Index was first printed in 1543, more than three centuries after that, but no matter. The gaffe is not entirely Jackson's fault. Here he was relying on Bart Brewer of Mission to Catholics, who made the same claim in one of his tracts, and Brewer in turn got the date from Loraine Boettner's *Roman Catholicism*, which gives no source for it.

Note the last phrase, “over 100 years before Wycliffe’s first translation”. This is not a gratuitous line, no idle reference or mere name dropping. Wycliffe is understood by most fundamentalists to have been the first to put Scripture into English.⁵ For them, the culmination of what Wycliffe is understood to have started is the King James Version. One will find in the case of many fundamentalists a reverence for that translation that approaches idolatry. There have been many fallings-out among fundamentalists because some will use only the King James Version, claiming that no other version is accurate, while others will adopt newer translations.

Jackson’s tract has other complaints about the Catholic Church. While attempting to suppress the Bible, the Church foists on Christianity things of her own fashioning, such as the doctrine of the Assumption. “The addition of blasphemous Tradition and changeable Papal teaching is as bad as looking for inspiration in [Mary Baker Eddy’s] *Science and Health*. . . or *The Book of Mormon*. It is difficult to come up with any modern definition of what is a cult and include Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, and a host of others and omit the largest false religious system of all—Roman Catholicism.” Jackson says that “only as we see the system for what it really is can we fulfill our evangelistic responsibilities to the millions of souls lost therein—blinded by Satan and believing a lie. May we clearly define the system and truly love the people, and may God use us in Roman Catholic evangelism.”

Is Roman Catholicism a Cult? is a tract that appeals mainly to committed fundamentalists. It will sway few Catholics because its title is alienating, and its few paragraphs try to cover so many points that none is covered well. More effective, no doubt, has been Jackson’s tract *Charismatic Catholics*. It has been printed by Tabernacle Press for Jackson and reprinted by the Conversion Center and Mission to Catholics; it is a good example of the way anti-Catholics cooperate.

Catholic charismatics are a prime target for fundamentalists because they already have a keen appreciation of the Bible. They actually read it, which many “mainline” Catholics do not; non-charismatics are often immune to appeals to the Bible because they know little about it. Those familiar with Scripture, on the other hand, sometimes find themselves unable to counter arguments posed by fundamentalists, since their study of apologetics and theology has not kept pace with their study of the Bible. They accept the premise that any Christian truth should be demonstrable by appealing to the plain words of the text, and they are dismayed to discover there is no clear

mention of auricular confession, infant baptism, or the Immaculate Conception in any book from Matthew to Revelation. Thus many charismatics (non-Catholic as well as Catholic, of course) fall prey to fundamentalist blandishments, each blandishment coming in the form of a quotation from Scripture.

“A person who claims to be a born again Christian and remains in the Roman Catholic Church is ignorant, disobedient, or hypocritical”, concludes Jackson. One cannot stay in the Catholic Church and evangelize from within. God “told his people to come out of paganism and idolatry” (2 Cor 6:14-18). The answer? “It is essential that every true born again child of God separate from the church of Rome or any false system of religion and unite with a Bible believing fundamental Christian local church so that they [*sic*] can serve God in true obedience.” To the person impressed by concatenated biblical quotations (examples of which will be omitted here), this kind of argument is persuasive. Charismatics see that syllogisms of a sort can be constructed from Bible passages, and they surprisingly often act on the syllogisms—as do thousands of Catholics who disdain the charismatic approach to religion but who, like some of their charismatic brethren, have no ready intellectual defenses against fundamentalism. Most Catholics, of whatever stripe, are vulnerable to fundamentalist attacks.

Just as some of Jackson’s tracts are aimed at a wide audience, others are aimed at a select few. One is aimed directly at seminarians. It is entitled *Think: Should You Become a Priest?* This pocket-sized leaflet first quotes Pius XII and John XXIII about the paucity of vocations. The reader is told that “St. Alphonsus Liguori wrote eloquently about the duties and dignity of a priest.” Then focus shifts. To answer the question on the cover, “we must go to the Word of God and to your innermost heart”. This passage is given: “And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins, but this man (Jesus), after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God. . . . For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified” (Heb 10:11-12, 14). A sacrificing priesthood is therefore a superfluity, says Jackson. The Bible clearly says so. “Ceasing to trust a human priesthood for propitiation and absolution, and placing our trust in Jesus’ perfect work—this is salvation!” He makes no attempt, of course, to consider how the Catholic Church understands the verses he quotes. One problem with fundamentalists is that they think the points they bring up have never been considered by the

Church. It does not occur to them to find out what informed Catholics understand by a particular passage of Scripture. They find it incomprehensible that someone could have a conclusion that differs from theirs. In this regard their minds lack subtlety.

They generally admit that Catholics hold their beliefs in good faith, but they think they hold them in unalloyed ignorance, having no rational grounds for them at all. When mention is made of someone believing in “blind faith”, most people immediately think of stereotypic Bible thumpers, but Bible thumpers, as often as not, think immediately of Catholics. They think Catholics believe what they do either out of habit, having been brought up that way, or because they are under the influence of rapacious clerics, who keep them in intellectual bondage the better to mulct them. The Catholic religion is the opium of the people, say fundamentalists.

Chapter 6

I Have Literally Bent Over Backwards

A generation ago the only one in the family who was well-known was Jerry Lee Lewis, who, with hits such as “Great Balls of Fire”, was at the top of the rock-and-roll charts. Jerry Lee long since disappeared from celebrity status, but the family still has someone at the top of the charts—the television rating charts, this time. It is Jerry Lee’s cousin, Jimmy Lee, better known as evangelist Jimmy Lee Swaggart,

“The Jimmy Swaggart Telecast” is seen by as many as three million Americans weekly. The ministry’s monthly magazine, *The Evangelist*, has about a million readers. Jimmy Swaggart is now as popular a television evangelist as Robert Schuller (of “Crystal Cathedral” fame), Oral Roberts, or Jerry Falwell, each of whom had a head start on him. Of the many television evangelists, great and small, it is Swaggart who is known for forthright anti-Catholicism.

An Assemblies of God minister, Swaggart bases his operations in Baton Rouge, Louisiana (which is “67% Catholic” and, he explains, “a little more superstitious, a little ‘more Catholic’ ” than the rest of the country).¹ There he has a \$30 million World Ministry Center, which includes the Jimmy Swaggart Bible College. It is in Baton Rouge that he tapes his programs and plans his crusades.²

For most of his career Swaggart has been indistinguishable from other television preachers. Only in the last few years has his anti-Catholicism become painfully noticeable, no doubt because anti-Catholicism has become fashionable. Like other trends, it has come out of the closet.

At first the objectionable comments were given over the air as infrequent *obiter dicta*. Listeners were told, for instance, that the Catholic Church killed fifty to sixty million people during the Dark Ages because they would not convert. “They cut your head off. They shot you through with an arrow. They tortured you to death”, Swaggart explained on one of his broadcasts. He said the Church had a law passed in 416 that made membership mandatory under

penalty of death, and he noted that “priests are just leading people to hell”. He decried “liturgical religious monstrosities” such as the Mass. Despite such remarks, much of his audience consists of Catholics.³

Things came to a head when Swaggart published “A Letter to My Catholic Friends” in the January 1983 issue of *The Evangelist*. The resulting brouhaha eventually died down, but Swaggart decided to stir things up once more after discovering that he had not lost all his support from Catholics and that many non-Catholics were pleased at what he had said. In July 1985 *The Evangelist* carried “the first in a series of articles [by Swaggart] which will, I hope, lay a scriptural foundation illuminating ‘the faith which was once delivered unto the saints’ (Jude 3)—and this same faith as interpreted within Roman Catholic teaching”. This series was in part a revision of the “Letter”, which had run to about a dozen pages, and the series was, in turn, revised into a book, *Catholicism & Christianity*.⁴

The Evangelist is a curious magazine, clearly centered about one man. Major articles are written by Swaggart or his wife, Frances. There are contributions by others, but they are usually secondary. In some issues, more pages are by the Swaggarts than by all other contributors combined. Consider the issue that inaugurated Swaggart’s series on Catholicism. The cover story was on “The New Evangelists: What Do They Preach?” In seven pages promoters of secular humanism were examined, including Bob Guccione, Hugh Hefner, Larry Flynt, Norman Lear, and Phil Donahue. The author: Jimmy Swaggart. Next was a question-and-answer column titled “Brother Swaggart, Here’s My Question”. (“Question: Is the Bible filled with inconsistencies, contradictions, and errors as some claim?”)

Next were some non-Swaggart pieces: one on prophecy, by Willard Cantelon, who “has met with world leaders in private and spent hours in personal interviews”; one on the afterlife, by David Wilkerson, author of *The Cross and the Switchblade*; an obituary; and two pages of news shorts. Then came the “Letters from Our Viewers” column, hosted by Frances Swaggart, and this was followed by a report on the Jimmy Swaggart Ministries’ charitable distributions overseas.

Jimmy Swaggart returned as author with “Christianity and Catholicism”; the accompanying photograph was of a gold crucifix at the end of a rosary. There followed a full-page advertisement encouraging readers to attend a Swaggart crusade; two pages on faith by C. M. Ward, a radio preacher for the Assemblies of God; and then another piece by Swaggart, “Startling Incidents

and Amazing Answers to Prayer”. (It is here one learned that “one of the nation’s major newspapers [unidentified] said just the other day, ‘Any time you see a Catholic church in Louisiana, you will also see a bar very close by.’ I think they were intending it as a compliment—which it certainly is not—but, basically, it is the truth.”)

Then came a request that the Jimmy Swaggart Ministries be mentioned in one’s will; a column on dating by the youth minister at the World Ministry Center; a first-person account of conversion by a Crow Indian; a two-page pitch for money by Frances Swaggart, who penned across the page, “Please let me bear [sic] my heart to you”; an advertisement for the *Jimmy Swaggart Giant Print Commentary Bible* (“The Best \$60 Investment You Could Ever Make!”); an open letter by Swaggart to the Assemblies of God on the eve of that denomination’s general council; and “From Me to You”, in which Swaggart prefaced his comments with “I believe God has spoken these words to me”. The last few pages of the magazine hawked cassettes, records, and booklets by Swaggart, the latter having titles such as *The Council of Jerusalem*, *Questions and Answers: Volume 4*, and *The Unpardonable Sin*.

No doubt about it: this is not a small operation. It is so large now, so successful, so moneyed, that Swaggart can chance alienating his Catholic viewers and readers by moving from the hard sell to the harder sell. In “A Letter to My Catholic Friends”, he put it this way: “I try never to pull any punches. I believe that if we are to truly serve our Lord, we must face all issues honestly and up-front. There have been times when I’ve made Catholics angry through statements I’ve made, but what I’ve said has always been said in love. Because I love them, I will tell them the truth.” Swaggart accepts that many Catholics have been born again; he thinks they fail to act on their rebirth if they remain in the Catholic Church. His “Letter” was intended to give them reasons to leave.

The “Letter” begins by noting that the Church “basically teaches that only those who are *in* the Catholic church will be saved”. This is of course true, although not in the Feeneyite sense. Fundamentalists do not object to such a claim—which amounts to saying that the Catholic Church is the only one founded by Christ—merely because it is some religion other than theirs that claims to be the Way. Their objection is that Catholics say an institution, a “system”, is necessary for salvation, “Bible Christians” often use the term religion in a derogatory, not in a theological or sociological, sense. Their meaning is not the dictionary’s, which defines religion as the recognition on

the part of man of a superhuman, controlling power deserving obedience and worship. By religion fundamentalists mean a complex, rule-laden, man-made, even casuistical scheme for effecting salvation on one's own.

Swaggart continues by saying that "Catholic tradition [which he nowhere defines] suggests that . . . Mary—not Jesus—is the mediator between God and man. There is little clear-cut distinction between God the Father and Jesus in the mind of most Catholics; hence, their tendency to think of *either* the Father or the Son as 'the Christ'." Catholics are thus Modalists—or perhaps Patri-passians who think the Father suffered on the Cross.

The reader learns, for instance, that "It was not long ago that the Catholic church *burned people at the stake*—by the tens of thousands—for *reading the Bible*! Only a generation ago Catholics were *forbidden* to read the Bible, the position being that if there were anything important in there the priest would tell the common people about it." The emphasis is Swaggart's, as is the notion that priests could not tell their parishioners much about the Bible because they read only a truncated version of it known as the breviary. "The Catholic church's doctrines are made up basically of legendary, mythical, apocryphal, human traditions—rather than being based on the Word of God." In fact, Catholicism is "a *false religion*. It is not a Christian religion, and it is *emphatically* not the 'church of Christ on earth' as it claims to be."

From generalities to specifics. The next topic is the papacy. Swaggart makes the same argument other fundamentalists make. He looks to the Greek text of Matthew 16:18-19 and argues that since Peter and the rock are referred to by two slightly different Greek words, the rock cannot be Peter but must be Christ. He makes no reference to the gender of Greek nouns or to the Aramaic language, which Christ spoke, which uses the word *kepha* in each place, so the passage reads: "Thou art *Kepha*, and upon this *kepha* I will build my church", just as in modern French the phrasing would be: "Thou art *Pierre*, and upon this *pierre* I will build my church." Reference to the Greek text is regularly made by fundamentalists when arguing with Catholics; it will be considered in a later chapter. For now it is enough to note this is an argument every Catholic needs to master, because every Catholic will find himself facing fundamentalists who try to impress him with their superficial, and largely mistaken, knowledge of Greek.⁵

After explaining that the power of the keys was nothing more than the power, or "right", to be the first to preach the Resurrection on Pentecost, not the wider power believed by Catholics to be held by the papacy, Swaggart

notes that “Peter would have been ineligible to be a Pope as he was married”. Surprisingly enough—or perhaps not so surprisingly, considering their lack of familiarity with the Bible—many Catholics are upset by this revelation. They think it is a telling point against the legitimacy of the papacy, since they have never heard that Popes or bishops or priests might at one time have been permitted to be married, just as few of them know that even today priests in the Eastern rites may be married. Swaggart himself might be disappointed to learn that a good number of early Popes, not just Peter, were not celibate. He might be especially disappointed to learn that this has always been acknowledged by Catholic historians and that no Catholic apologist has ever thought the fact argued against the existence of the papacy, for the very good reason that clerical celibacy, at whatever level, is a discipline, not a doctrine.

If Swaggart’s argument regarding Peter’s marital status does not clinch the matter, the next point does. He says “there isn’t a shred of literary, historical, archaeological, or scriptural evidence that Peter went to Rome or was ever in Rome. The Bible makes no mention of Peter being in Rome, and Paul, in his letter *from* Rome, never mentioned Peter being there. . . . There isn’t one word in secular history supporting the Catholic contention that Peter lived in Rome.” Swaggart is not just wrong here, but ignorant.

If it is archaeological evidence he wants, he can turn to John Evangelist Walsh’s *The Bones of St. Peter*,⁶ which recounts in detail the excavations under the high altar of St. Peter’s Basilica. If he wants literary or historical proof, he can turn to a reference work such as William A. Jurgens’ *The Faith of the Early Fathers*,⁷ which quotes sixteen passages from early Christian writers attesting to Peter’s being in Rome and dying there. In fact, we have more sources citing Peter’s presence in Rome than we have affirming Caesar’s crossing of the Rubicon.

Apparently Swaggart has never read the Fathers of the Church or any historian such as Eusebius, and there is scant evidence of any familiarity with archaeology or ancient literature. He knows little about the “literary, historical, or archaeological evidence” in the matter. The only evidence he has is the fourth on his list, scriptural evidence, and that is the only evidence most fundamentalists will consider in a matter such as this, even when the Bible is incompetent to decide the issue.

Fundamentalists’ reverence for the word of God is often so extreme that it becomes distorted, and they think the Bible should be the last word on any matter occurring between the start of Christ’s public ministry and the close of

the first century. It does not occur to them that other works may shed light on happenings of the period. What is more, they do not perceive that we can gain considerable insight regarding the proper interpretation of the Bible if we discover how the earliest Christians understood it.

Swaggart ends his discourse on the nonexistence of the papacy by saying, “Catholic tradition says that Peter was the first Pope. Who, then, was the second one?” Granted, one will not find the second Pope named as such in the Bible, but his name is listed in any encyclopedia. He was Linus, as a few moments’ research would have shown Swaggart, who made no effort to look at even plainly secular sources (forget Catholic sources) in developing his critique of Catholicism. His main source was, as it is for most anti-Catholic fundamentalists, Loraine Boettner’s *Roman Catholicism*.

From the papacy Swaggart moves on to the standard objection that the Church violates 1 Timothy 4:1-3 because priestly celibacy amounts to the “forbidding to marry” that Paul complains about, and from there he goes to Matthew 23:9 (“call no man on earth your father”) to demonstrate that the priesthood does not really exist because priests are called “Father”. Then it is to the Mass, where the reader is told that “it is *barbaric* to even insinuate that He has to be crucified again and again”. Of course, it is Swaggart who does the insinuating, since no Catholic thinks Christ dies anew at each Mass.

In peroration, it is back to Mary, who turns out to have had other children since Jesus was called her “first-born” (Mt 1:25)—Swaggart being wholly ignorant of the meaning of the term under the Mosaic law—and whose own mother cannot have been named Anne since “there is no hint, either in secular history or the Bible” of such a person, an example of Swaggart’s unfamiliarity with the apocryphal gospels.

Swaggart’s end is in his beginning, “As I close I want to say, as I’ve said previously in this article, that the Catholic organization is not a Christian organization. Its claims are false; it is a false religion. It is not the Christian plan of salvation, nor the Christian way. Whosoever follows its errant doctrines will be deceived and end up eternally lost.” He reassures the annoyed by saying that “every statement in this article is *fact* based on Scripture and historical record. It is not the ranting of someone blindly opposed to something as a matter *of opinion*.” And he really believes that. As uninformed and misinformed as Swaggart is, he is no Jack Chick or Tony Alamo. He does not try to deceive. He thinks he is giving the whole story, and his facts, such as they are, are taken mainly from sources he trusts.

Encouraged by the response to his articles in *The Evangelist*, Swaggart published in 1986 *Catholicism & Christianity*, an attractively bound hardback described on the dust jacket as a “powerful new book [that] examines each of the basic tenets of Catholicism and compares them against the standards and precepts of the Word of God”. In fact, it is not as complete as Loraine Boettner’s *Roman Catholicism* (it has half as many pages and a third as much text). This is not to say that Boettner’s book is complete in the sense of being scholarly or of taking into account Catholic rejoinders to his claims, but Boettner considers more topics, and always at greater length, than does Swaggart. No, *Catholicism & Christianity* will not replace *Roman Catholicism* as the main handbook for professional anti-Catholics, but it may reach more folks in the pews and have a greater effect in the long run.

Swaggart’s book recapitulates his magazine series; indeed, much of it is lifted word for word from *The Evangelist*. Since the book had, in a way, a trial run, the ubiquity of its blunders, non sequiturs, and contradictions is surprising. If criticisms of the magazine series were proffered, whether by Catholics or fundamentalists, they apparently were not incorporated into the manuscript of the book.

Start with a modest error. On the dust jacket and in the introduction,⁸ Swaggart says there are “over 600 million Roman Catholics” in the world. But in his concluding chapter he says “there are nearly 800 million nominal Catholics in the world”.⁹ Feeling charitable, one might say this is just an example of poor proofreading, but the next error cannot be.

In referring to the Assumption, Swaggart says: “Oddly enough, this mystical belief had been a peripheral precept [*sic*] within the Catholic church since the Middle Ages, but was only given official certification in 1950.”¹⁰ In other words, the doctrine had been believed, even if not officially defined, for maybe eight hundred years. Elsewhere he refers to “Mary being *suddenly* taken bodily into heaven. (We say ‘suddenly’ because no one knew about Mary’s physical ‘translation’ before it was unexpectedly announced by the Vatican in 1950.)”¹¹

Swaggart asserts that transubstantiation “is, without question, one of the most absurd doctrines ever imposed on a trusting public”,¹² though he does not venture to say how such an absurdity can be believed by millions of people who, demonstrably, are neither fools nor knaves. He repeats the common notion that the doctrine “was first formulated by Paschasius Radbertus, Abbot of Corbey, at the beginning of the ninth century”.¹³ His

confusion about the Eucharist is exemplified by his belief that the chief eucharistic feast is “Holy Thursday, or the Feast of Corpus Christi”.¹⁴

Discussing the duty to confess at least once annually, which only applies to those in mortal sin, Swaggart claims that “even though a person had not sinned during the year, he would still be consigned to eternal hellfire—simply because he had not ‘reported in’ to the priest during the year.”¹⁵ He asks, “How many political figures, public servants, judges, and men of high and important positions are held in bondage because of intimate secrets revealed to their priests? The most personal facts of every Catholic family, of every Catholic heart (which should be known only to God) are known by priests in their most intimate details.”¹⁶

Swaggart thinks the title “pope” means “universal bishop”, that “inquisition” translates as “torture”, that an indulgence is “a permit for indulging in sin”, that Paul said bishops had to be married (did they cease being bishops when they became widowers?), that the Rosary was “copied from the Hindus and Muhammadans [*sic*]”, that “by tradition was meant human opinions”, that the Bible was placed on the Index of Forbidden Books in 1229 (the Index was instituted in 1543, and no authentic Bible was ever put on it). These are just a few of the blunders appearing on only five pages.¹⁷

Swaggart notes that “in this book on Catholic tradition, I have literally bent over backwards to ensure that every statement is true”.¹⁸ His contortions do not seem to have helped much, perhaps because he relied on few sources other than his imagination and bitter ex-Catholics. His bibliography consists of only fifteen works, some of which he apparently did not use at all in writing his book.¹⁹ In *Catholicism & Christianity* there are dozens of quotations—largely from anti-Catholics, but also from ancient Catholic writers, even from papal encyclicals—yet page numbers are given only twice,²⁰ and usually the titles of books from which quotations are taken are not given. Often the writer’s name is withheld (or not known), as when Swaggart introduces a quotation with the words “one Catholic stated”.²¹

The truth is that Swaggart does not know what pages or books or authors the quotations he uses came from (presuming they are legitimate quotations in the first place), because he never read the quoted works. He lifted the quotations from the writings of other anti-Catholics, who failed to give citations in *their* books. “My information has come primarily from former

Catholic priests”, he admits,²² He refers to Bart Brewer’s *Pilgrimage from Rome* and Clark Butterfield’s *Night Journey from Rome to the New Jerusalem*, hardly books from which one could expect to learn much about Catholic beliefs or history. (It may give one a feel for the reliability of these works to know that Brewer’s was published by Bob Jones University Press and Butterfield’s is distributed by the Antichrist Information Center, which is run by Alberto Rivera, the hero of Jack Chick’s comic book *Alberto*.)

If Swaggart “bent over backwards”, literally or otherwise, there is scant evidence of it. His book is a fine example of the danger of mixing a little knowledge with considerable prejudice. If he were less prejudiced—that is, less inclined to accept blindly every unflattering thing said about the Catholic Church—and more knowledgeable, Jimmy Swaggart would be embarrassed that his name is on such a travesty, because he is not really a bad man, just a man badly misinformed.

No one would mistake him for an academician; he does not lie awake at night wondering whether he did his homework. What he is is famous, influential, and effective. He is even, according to Barbara Nauer, who heads the Catholic Writer and Artist Guild, a nice man—and she has some grounds to say that, since she considers Jimmy and Frances Swaggart her friends and once spent three hours “yelling at and pounding the table” with the man. (She is mentioned, but not by name, in *Catholicism & Christianity*.)²³ “Swaggart’s irk with Catholicism seems to rise from thoroughly honorable motives”, she says. “Swaggart’s bias against Catholicism, given his fervid Protestantism, is in no way unreasonable. Swaggart seems ready to like *Catholics*.” The task for Catholics is to “stop wringing their hands about Swaggart and start educating him about the true Church”. The same should be done for less-famous fundamentalists. If Catholics will not do that, “we *deserve* to live with his horsewhippings”.²⁴

Bill Jackson’s Christians Evangelizing Catholics is a one-man ministry unknown to most Catholics, even to most fundamentalists. By contrast, Jimmy Swaggart’s name is recognized even by people who have never watched his program. Where Jackson works with at most thousands of dollars, Swaggart has tens of millions. In a year Jackson might speak to a few thousand people; on any Sunday Swaggart speaks to thousands of thousands.

Yet there are few Jimmy Swaggarts. The number of television evangelists is small, and there are few radio preachers who have syndicated programs. But there are hundreds of fundamentalists who host radio or television

programs that are broadcast over just one station, and there are thousands who have ministries along the lines of Jackson's. While most of these operations are restricted to one town or one section of a town (Jackson's is geographically large as such things go), they have a cumulative impact far greater than Swaggart's because there are so many of them.

The demographics are unavailable, but of Swaggart's three million American viewers, surely only a few hundred thousand are Catholics. (Other stars of religious television would enjoy higher proportions since their anti-Catholicism is muted.) Even Swaggart's Catholic viewers will be more influenced by the evangelist that comes to the door than by the evangelist heard on television. Most Catholics who meet fundamentalism meet it at the local level, and, if they are convinced by its arguments, they are convinced because they have spoken directly with local fundamentalists who have taken them through the Bible and various tracts.

The most important thing about Swaggart's ministry so far as Catholics are concerned—what makes it as influential as it is—is that it legitimizes anti-Catholicism and emboldens local fundamentalists to knock on Catholic doors. They normally would not take such a step without considerable prodding. On the whole, fundamentalists are reserved, wary of talking about religion outside their own circles, and until recent years they largely kept to themselves. But Swaggart and the other media preachers are exemplars. Their apparent success in taking on the Roman institution (which gives no audible answer to their charges) encourages the people who gather for Bible study each week at Good Book Baptist.

Chapter 7

Appealing to the Young

Anti-Catholic fundamentalists are not necessarily old fogies. Exhibit number one: the late Keith Green, popular religious singer who was killed in a plane crash. His *Last Days Newsletter*, published by his Last Days Ministries of Lindale, Texas, carried four installments of the *Catholic Chronicles*, each “edited and compiled by Keith Green”. These issues of the newsletter were so well received that they were reprinted in 1980 and 1981 in the form of tracts. The tracts found a wide audience. Though no longer available from Last Days Ministries,¹ they remain influential and deserve mention.

Give them their due. They are simply the best-looking tracts put out by either side in the fundamentalist-Catholic squabble. The typography is clean, almost booklike (italics, bold, reduced footnotes), there is original artwork, and the printing is in two colors, making for black text, red headlines, and a pink background. Not unjustifiably, the outfit that ran the presses is called Pretty Good Printing.

Somewhat surprisingly, the first tract is on the Holy Eucharist; it is subtitled “Eating the Flesh of Deity”. Green explains to his readers why he avoids “the more obvious departures from biblical foundation—such as the worship of and prayers to the Virgin Mary, the infallibility of the pope, purgatory and prayers for the dead. . . .” They will be discussed later, he says. “But for this first article I believe that we should get right to the root” of Catholic worship, and that is the Eucharist. He at least knows what the opposition’s core devotional belief is.

There follows a reasonably fair explication of Catholic doctrines, although it is laced with smart asides and an abundance of exclamation points. Green gives extensive quotations from the canons of Trent, getting in his jabs by prefacing his account with biblical verses such as “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image” (Ex 20:4), the point being, of course, that the host is a graven image. He then comments on those scriptural passages Catholics use in proof of the Eucharist, and he makes the standard argument that the Greek

in Mt 26:26 (“This is my body. . .”) can only mean the bread “represents”, “signifies”, or “stands for” Christ. He admits the Greek phrase is *touto esti*, and he says it means “this is” (which is true), but he insists, contrary to any Greek grammar book, that the verb can only be taken in the symbolic sense.

Regarding this and all the other topics he considers, his arguments are unoriginal. He even concludes this tract with a few paragraphs on the “real” origin of the Eucharist. Like Ralph Woodrow—perhaps because he read Woodrow’s *Babylon Mystery Religion*—Green finds the Eucharist prefigured in the worship of Osiris and in Mithraism.

The attack is stepped up in the second of the *Catholic Chronicles*. This one is on the Mass and is subtitled *Jesus Dies Again*. Those with good eyesight will catch the footnote on the first page, where credit is given to one of Bart Brewer’s tracts, another example of the way anti-Catholic fundamentalists rely on and quote one another.

On the inside is a reproduction of a Gustav Doré drawing of the Crucifixion. The text is again unoriginal so far as Green’s arguments are concerned, but he differs from other fundamentalist writers in that he quotes Catholic sources. Canons of Trent are given, as are passages from Vatican II and some lines from a booklet distributed by the Knights of Columbus’ Catholic Information Service.

Green sees the falsity of the Mass in its apparent violation of Christ’s words that “It is finished” (Jn 19:30). Not distinguishing between Christ’s death and his sacrifice, he says in the Mass Christ dies anew, and thus Catholics think his task was not finished at all. Green is unable to perceive that the sacrifice can be perpetuated (presented again) even though the death occurred once. There follow four selections from Hebrews, each, to Green, attesting to the contradiction between what the Mass purports to be and what the Bible says. “Once for all” (Heb 10:10) is the banner fundamentalists wave. Christ died once, so Catholics, who think he dies again at each Mass, aren’t really Christians, but cultists.

To establish the Catholic Church as nothing but a cult, Green presents the third tract in his series, *Salvation According to Rome*, The largest tract (11 by 17 inches, folded to make four pages) and the longest (about 4,000 words), it was surely not the work of a single evening at the typewriter. It is a formidable piece of paper—not in the sense of the soundness of the arguments, but in their intensity, their seeming thoroughness, their ability to impress the theologically uneducated (which is to say just about everyone in

the pews, whether fundamentalist or Catholic).

Green's comparison is between "salvation by grace", which implies an absolute assurance of salvation, and the Catholic sacramental system. He begins by deriding the Catholic distinction between mortal and venial sins, saying "there is in fact no such thing as a venial sin. All sin is mortal! It is true that some sins are worse than others, but it is also true that all sins if not forgiven bring death to the soul." He talismanically quotes Scripture: "The wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23); "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek 18:4); but overlooks 1 John 5:17: "Not all sin is fatal."

This is a good example of a common failing among fundamentalists, and not just those who are actively anti-Catholic. They memorize their lessons well, but they memorize selectively because they are taught only certain things. Although they read the entire Bible, with, naturally enough, special emphasis on the New Testament, verses that do not mesh with what their pastors have told them are either skipped or just not perceived as being trouble spots. On any one topic, they learn verses that, concatenated, seem to prove conclusively their position, and it is on these that they concentrate their apologetics. Few of them seriously ponder the meaning of those large chunks of the Bible that are pushed into the background. It is the rare fundamentalist who will go verse by verse through Scripture, seeing if he can piece together a coherent whole. In fact, most ex-fundamentalists say their first doubts about fundamentalism came when they read a biblical passage for the hundredth time and suddenly realized that it did not square with what they'd been taught at Sunday school.

Convinced, in the first place, that the Bible is easy to understand, and convinced that all its parts admit but one interpretation and that anyone interpreting differently must be acting in bad faith, they had given no thought to the possibility that the Catholic position might have something in its favor. The Bible must, unless the reader is not a Christian at all, lead him to but one interpretation, which happens to be identical with that of his fundamentalist pastor. There is no point in looking elsewhere.

Though they held this view, these onetime fundamentalists could not entirely escape the plain words of the text. First this, then that verse would bother them. They would read that "not all sin is fatal" and wonder, not whether sin is to be divided between mortal and venial (even ex-Catholic fundamentalists generally have no feel for those terms), but, more simply, how that verse could be reconciled with apparently contradictory ones. Their

teachers' technique of selective quotation (which they believed was not selective, but exhaustive) kept them in line, but the number of these discomfiting passages grew, and eventually a critical mass was reached.

In *Witness*, Whittaker Chambers explained that the communist, before his break with that ideology, one night wakes up in a cold sweat, convinced he is hearing screams. What he hears is his subconscious—and perhaps his conscience—finally piecing together stray fragments, and he realizes what communism really is. He can Caste its reality. On one level he in fact always has known, or at least for a long time known, what it is, but his prejudice has kept the implications of that knowledge submerged. Then he hears screams.²

It is somewhat the same with the fundamentalist before his conversion to another brand of Christianity. For a long time he has gathered these ill-fitting verses, “pondering them in his heart”. From their existence he has drawn no conclusion, trusting that at length he will be shown just how they fit into his creed, until, seemingly out of the blue, it occurs to him that fundamentalism may be fundamentally wrong.

But this is getting ahead of the story. It is enough to note here that Keith Green's tracts are fine examples of the best small-compass, anti-Catholic writing by fundamentalists. He uses all the standard techniques, all the pat phrases, and he uses them convincingly—or so it must seem, since the tracts have enjoyed a considerable success, particularly among the young who used to listen to his songs.

The fourth of the *Catholic Chronicles* asks, *What Did Vatican II Really Change?* The answer: nothing. It is a favorite ploy of fundamentalists to say that the Church made a big production out of changing itself, bringing things up to date, telling the world it was sloughing off its old prejudices and needless doctrinal encumbrances, when in fact all the essentials remain the same. It was all a public relations gambit, designed to elicit sympathy for a Church in decline. And it worked. Most people have been fooled, but not the fundamentalists.

Some of this, of course, is quite true. There have been changes since the Council, but there has been no alteration at all in basic doctrines or in principles of operation. The Catholic Church is still the sole true Church (it is in the Catholic Church that Christ's Church “subsists”, according to Vatican II),³ and, while Friday abstinence may no longer be required, the Church has not abandoned the principle that religious authority may legislate on matters of discipline and devotion,

Green quotes at length from Loraine Boettner's *Roman Catholicism*. Boettner, called by Green a "noted Evangelical authority on Roman Catholic doctrine", looks at Vatican II and sadly concludes that "an infallible church simply cannot repent". Rome will always be Rome, and Vatican II changed nothing of importance. The Catholic Church has scraped off its barnacles and is ready to take to the seas again. This enemy of truth may be more seaworthy now than it was a generation ago. "The agelong danger that Protestantism has faced from the Roman Church has not diminished", cautions Boettner; "in fact, it may well have increased."⁴ Like Queen Victoria, he is not amused, nor is Keith Green, nor, one supposes, are the impressionable readers of the *Catholic Chronicles*.

From Texas and the home of Last Days Ministries the focus shifts to New York, where we find another organization that appeals largely to the young, Solid Rock Ministries. It mails out, at irregular intervals, a newsletter that carries, below the mailing label, the line "Jesus is coming back soon,. . . Are you ready?" According to the head of the organization, Donald Spitz, among those who should not feel comfortable in answering that question are Catholics, for the simple reason that Catholics, if they remain Catholics, are damned.

One issue of the newsletter opens with two revelations granted Spitz (they read like the pedestrian stuff some Catholic visionaries claim to have been told), then it goes on to warn of one of Satan's favorite tricks, religion. "Another of his favorite lies is to make you 'religious'. He'll keep you entangled in rituals, sacraments, ceremonies, and other 'traditions of men' that have been manufactured into doctrines."

The reader is not surprised to discover, a few pages further along, a letter from a young woman who explains, as an ex-Catholic, that she knows Solid Rock Ministries is "persecuted and maligned because of the stand [it has] taken opposing the false doctrines of Catholicism". She then recounts her childhood upbringing and the discovery, as a teenager, that "despite my fear of God and my strongly held moral beliefs, I was more prone to do evil than good. Countless penances did not improve my sinful disposition", and she says she ended near despair. She was invited repeatedly to a Bible study, but regularly declined. At last, her resistance gone, she decided to go. "I intended to teach those 'born again fanatics', those 'Jesus freaks', a lesson in Catholicism." She was surprised to discover they were studying not a catechism, but the Gospel according to John. (What did she expect at a

Protestant Bible study?)

“As the sweetness of the Word of God gently rolled over my ‘sin tired’ senses, I found that I was unable to criticize the teaching of the Word”—perhaps because, as a Catholic, she had never been introduced to the study of the Bible and was in no position to raise even the simplest objections to odd interpretations of it. In six months, after attending the classes weekly, she was “born again”. She tried attending Mass at St. Patrick’s Cathedral, and her soul “was filled with rage when I realized the damnable crime that was being committed against God and against millions of sincere, yet spiritually blinded people”. It is these people, these Catholics, that she and the people at Solid Rock Ministries mean to reach. They aim mainly at the young.

Her letter is followed by an article on “Cults and More Cults”. The author is Spitz. After perfunctory mention of the Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Mormons, he gets right to the point. The real enemy is the Catholic Church. His arguments are unexceptional and are not worth reproducing at length. One story of his must suffice. “One day at Mass [this was before he unpoped] I remember the priest reading from the Gospel of Matthew, about not using vain repetitions in prayer. I thought to myself, ‘That’s very beautiful, and also really makes sense.’ No sooner was the reading completed when the service continued on with some ‘canned prayers’ repeated numerous times, followed by a sermon on the ‘Joys of the Rosary’ ”. He closes by noting, with Loraine Boettner and others, that Vatican II really changed nothing of substance. Indeed, he even refers to *Unam Sanctam* and says it is still a fair indicator of the Catholic position (true enough, if understood properly). As Spitz puts it, the bull, issued by Boniface VIII, said “submission to the authority of the Pope is a requirement for salvation”. The Catholic Church is out to get us all.

Chapter 8

At the Fringe

“There has been a multi-million dollar campaign made through the media to convince people that I am a bigoted, anti-Catholic, hate-literature publisher”, wrote Jack Chick in the introduction to *Smokescreens*.¹ “And do you know something? They have been very effective in convincing people that this is what I am,”

Apparently they have, whoever “they” are, because Jack Chick is generally regarded as the king of the anti-Catholic publishers. He has received more attention in the Catholic press since 1980 than all other professional anti-Catholics combined, and his rantings against the Church have inspired even Protestant publications, such as *Christianity Today*, to investigate his operation. His ideas are so perverse, his hate mongering so outlandish, that even some anti-Catholics shun him. If the average Catholic has heard anything about the recent revival of anti-Catholic prejudice, he has heard about Jack Chick.

Because of all the publicity, two things have happened. Chick and his chief assistant, Alberto Rivera (who claims to be a onetime Jesuit and bishop), have been given a prominence in the anti-Catholic movement they in fact do not have, their writings seeming to be more influential than they really are, and other anti-Catholic organizations—the ones that produce the converts to fundamentalism—have been ignored. It may be that in some Catholic publications Chick and Rivera have received more column inches than anyone other than the Pope. And they simply have not been worth it, because their barks are far out of proportion to their bites. They make good copy but few converts and nowhere near the converts one would expect from all the fireworks.

The other problem is that coverage of them has meant coverage of other anti-Catholic organizations has been shallow. While full-page articles have been devoted to Chick Publications’ comics, in most Catholic papers only passing comments have been given to the organizations that really have been

dragging Catholics out of the Church and into fundamentalism. Chick and Rivera have thrown something of a shadow across the fundamentalist landscape, and it is sometimes hard to realize there are other groups lurking in the bushes. One reason for this is that Chick has sought publicity as though he were running for office, while most professional anti-Catholics quietly go about their work, making no effort to grab headlines. They want converts, not notoriety. To seek the public eye is to put oneself on the spot.

It is one thing to make strange claims about the Catholic religion, but something else to find yourself having to support the claims with facts and rational arguments, which you might have to do if you shout too loudly. So most fundamentalists are reserved. They push their ideas, but avoid confrontations that force them to debate. Only when they think they are up against ill-informed papists (and no one else) do they open their satchels, drag out a Bible, and ask, “How does *this* square with what the Catholic Church says?” But Chick does not worry about having his arguments fall flat because he does not argue. He just, well, pontificates and then ignores challenges to fight.

None of this means Chick is not worth covering. He is. His colorful comic books and pocket-sized tracts have been widely distributed, and some Catholics, particularly impressionable teenagers and young adults, have accepted his notions and left the Barque of Peter at the first port of call. But most people influenced by Chick have been opposed to Catholicism all along and never gave any allegiance to Rome. Chick’s materials merely heighten their native bigotry and give them the satisfaction of knowing that their prejudices are, in some circles, socially acceptable. After all, here is someone much more prejudiced than they, someone who has achieved a measure of notoriety, someone who has put the enemy on the defensive, and he seems to be doing quite well, thank you.

Chick’s literature would be unimportant, quite unworthy of the sustained treatment it has received in the Catholic press, if his were the only anti-Catholic organization in the nation. There are few flat-Earthers, and no one pays them much heed. They would be worth examining, perhaps, if there were societies of oval-Earthers who received legitimacy because they could separate themselves in the public mind from those who think the world is shaped like a fat dish. Chick’s very existence makes all the other anti-Catholic groups look moderate, and they are therefore more influential than they otherwise would be. Fundamentalists who are squeamish about

supporting all of Chick's theories owe him a vote of thanks; he makes them look good.

It is similar to the big lie technique. Most people, even most with an ingrained prejudice against the Church, realize the comic books are grotesqueries. They seem to say, "We acknowledge Jack Chick is overzealous; we admit that. But his zealotry only demonstrates that what Mission to Catholics, the Conversion Center, and Jimmy Swaggart say must be accurate. These other evangelists have eliminated Chick's infelicities, and what we are left with is the unvarnished truth." It is this kind of thinking that makes Chick's work important.

He first gained notoriety with the publication of the comic book *Alberto* in 1979. This is Alberto Rivera's story—or so it is claimed. The thirty-two pages are well illustrated, in the style of Marvel Comics. The drawings are detailed, even explicit, making no effort to leave the reader wondering. The story begins in Spain in 1942. The first few pages recount the last hours of Alberto's mother. The young Alberto is shown at her deathbed. The priest in attendance tells him "your mother has not only received the sacraments, but special indulgences by the pope, our Holy Father". It thus should be an easy death, but not so. The next box shows her last moments. She sees "horrible monsters, coming at me!!" Hands raised to keep the visions at bay, she cries, "Don't you see them? They want to put me in fire! They want to get me, Alberto! I don't want to die and go there!" But, of course, she does die, and she does go there, even though we are told her family knew she was a saint. "To my knowledge," said her husband, "she never missed going to Mass." Alberto, not comforted by the priest, thinks that "It's all a lie! The sacraments didn't help my mother. . . . The Church didn't help her when she needed help and comfort." Despite his disillusionment, Alberto becomes a priest.

We next see him, now "Dr." Alberto Rivera, in San Diego in 1979, mysteriously run off the freeway by some enemy, he finds temporary refuge through a friend and begins to recount his story, beginning with the true nature of the Church. The tale is familiar to anyone who has read Maria Monk's revelations. In Spain, for instance, convents and monasteries are connected by tunnels; along the passages are chambers where the bodies of illicitly conceived (and quickly murdered) infants are buried. The Pope does not actually run the Church; the real ruler is the Jesuit General. The tortures of the Inquisition are recounted in glorious, dripping color. And so forth.

Rivera was trained from youth, he says, to infiltrate and subvert

Protestantism. The denominations assigned to him were the Plymouth Brethren, Pentecostal, Baptist, and United Evangelical. He was fabulously successful and was rewarded by secretly being made a bishop. His credentials are demonstrated through a photograph of what purports to be an identification card issued him by the Spanish government. His photograph (he is wearing a Roman collar) seems to have been superimposed over the card. The reader is also shown “a copy of the last official certification given to me just before I left Spain in 1967”. Investigations by *Christianity Today*² and the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights³ confirmed that neither the Diocese of Madrid, where Rivera claims to have been a priest, nor the Jesuits have any record of him, but what can one expect from papist conspirators?

Alberto was followed by *Double-Cross*, a recounting of Rivera’s further exploits, particularly the rescue of his sister from the clutches of rapacious nuns (her escape from the convent seems to have been modeled closely on Maria Monk’s) and Rivera’s flight from hit squads sent after him by the Vatican. The reader is regaled with a photograph of Kathryn Kuhlman meeting Paul VI and a drawing of Jimmy Carter meeting John Paul II. These well-known Christians were in cahoots with Rome. And so was someone else—Jim Jones turns out to have been a Jesuit who did himself in, along with his followers, in fulfillment of his Jesuit oath.

Later additions to the Chick Publications library include *The Godfathers*, which demonstrates that the Catholic Church is the “Mother of Abominations” referred to in Revelation 17; *The Force*, “a prophetic study revealing the occult side of the Whore of Revelation”; and *The Big Betrayal*, based on Charles Chiniquy’s *50 Years in the Church of Rome*, which demonstrates that the Church arranged Abraham Lincoln’s assassination. If something meatier than comics is wanted, the reader can turn to Chick Publications’ illustrated catalogue and order books such as *The Two Babylons*, another nineteenth-century potboiler; *Night Journey from Rome to the New Jerusalem*, by Clark Butterfield, allegedly an ex-priest; *The Vatican-Moscow-Washington Alliance*, by longtime Catholic-baiter Avro Manhattan; or even *The Secret History of the Jesuits*, which “boldly exposes the Vatican’s involvement in world politics, intrigues, and the fomenting of wars throughout history”.

Then there is *Smokescreens*. This ninety-three-pager is actually a transcript of a cassette the author made. He markets it by saying that the reader gets not

only the words of the cassette, but revealing photographs as well. “What you are going to read in this book is absolutely devastating.” He explains that “we believe at Chick Publications that the Whore of Revelation is the Roman Catholic Institution”,⁴ and he names such Protestant lights as Luther, Calvin, Knox, and, in more recent years, Moody and Spurgeon as agreeing with this conclusion. The title of the book comes from the smokescreens the Jesuits have set to make people think the Whore of Revelation is something that will come in the distant future, not something that is present today and headquartered in the Vatican.

There follow several short chapters: one on “The Wafer-God”, another looking at the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre, a third on the way Croatian Catholics supposedly backed the Nazis, Then come chapters on the application of Revelation 17 to the Church, the way Catholics have secretly gained influence through the television shows of supposedly Protestant evangelists, and the Vatican’s long-term plans for conquest.

Next comes self-congratulation. Chick explains how brave he was to publish Alberto Rivera’s story. “When it finally dawned on me that we were being set up for another inquisition, I realized what a mess I’d be in if I sounded the alarm and the Christians wouldn’t believe it, I could lose our business, our reputation and friends. If I printed Alberto’s story, I would be going into a battle that would jeopardize my family and my own life.” But he knew what to do. “I went before the Lord in prayer and the thing I dreaded came to pass. I asked the Lord if I should attack the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth. Should I attack the Vatican? The Lord said yes. And so we published *Alberto*.” Although he followed the Lord’s explicit directions, Chick didn’t get the backing he expected from other fundamentalists. He said of one, “Here is a man I used to pray for. But no longer. The Lord stopped me”—the same Lord, apparently, who instructed his followers to love their enemies, even their former accomplices. “When the heat came on Chick Publications for what we were doing, I was amazed. It all came through the same group. There seemed to be a link between all these men who are promoting the story that Alberto is a fraud.” He cites the stories in *Christianity Today*, *Cornerstone* (a magazine appealing to young evangelicals), and *Our Sunday Visitor*.⁵

Then he demonstrates there is no honor among professional anti-Catholics. He attacks Bill Jackson of Christians Evangelizing Catholics and Bart Brewer, head of Mission to Catholics. “Both of these men are supposed to be

operating ministries to Catholics. And yet, they're going around to churches trying to destroy our credibility." Well, not quite. Brewer, for instance, noted in his newsletter, *Challenger*, that he has been asked often about Alberto Rivera's credibility, and he would neither support nor disavow either Rivera or Jack Chick. On this matter he took the agnostic position.

After Jack Chick got the publicity he so ardently sought, he had to go it alone. Not entirely alone, perhaps, for he still had Alberto Rivera, who could tell him about the "blueprint for Catholic America", something he was briefed on when a Jesuit. It went all the way back to the time of the Pilgrims. Remember those people leaving Europe for America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, seeking religious freedom, people such as the Pilgrims? All Protestants? Hardly. Among them were numerous papists from England, Ireland, and France, "These were plants", Rivera told Chick. "The Jesuits made sure this part of our history was erased and removed." Once the fifth column was in place, its task was to "destroy or control all the Christian schools across America. Throughout the years, Jesuits, working undercover, have gotten into special committees on school boards to remove the emphasis on the Bible and replace it with psychology as found in the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola." They transformed public schools into Ignatian retreats. After the schools came the judiciary, then politics, then the military and newspapers. "Even back in the time of Lincoln over half the newspapers in the United States were controlled by the Vatican."⁶

Chick asked Rivera, "How Catholic is our military position?"

"Horrifying", said Rivera.

"I then asked about the political picture."

"It is even worse."

"Then I said: What about the Catholic structure of the judiciary?"

"It is very painful because of the heavy Jesuit penetration of this area", said Rivera.

"Is this preparing the way for the coming inquisition?" asked Chick.

"That's correct", replied Rivera. "First for anarchy. We were briefed that after all these years of penetration and infiltration, what was needed was riots and anarchy in order to finally take over. By the time the Roman Catholic Institution is ready to take over politically, militarily, educationally, and religiously, that means they will have some legal basis to do so."

Is there any hope? wondered Chick. Yes, said Rivera, but only if Chick Publications' materials are distributed even more widely. The United States,

conveniently enough, is where the prophecies of the Last Days will be fulfilled, and the ground has to be prepared. “If it were not for the publications we printed, we would be in a different situation today.”⁷

Time grows short. Protestant pastors have to be on guard; all the worst things they have heard about Catholics are true. Those are Catholic eyes staring at them in the night. “I was recently told”, recounts Chick, “that in 1949 an ex-Jesuit priest told a Rev. Eubanks in California that when the Vatican takes control of the United States, every pastor and his family will be shot in the head.”⁸ And if that is not convincing, what is? What further proof is needed, save perhaps the name of the ex-Jesuit, the full name of Rev. Eubanks, and the name of the man who recently told all this to Chick? It should be enough to know that “the Jesuits, the Illuminati, the Opus Dei, and the Masons”⁹ are the real makers of smokescreens. One need only keep his eyes open.

Many Catholics have been doing just that, keeping them open and on Jack Chick and Alberto Rivera. The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights has reported on Chick Publications since at least 1981, and *Our Sunday Visitor* and *The National Catholic Register* have run articles, short and long, about the duo. Chick no doubt has made a tidy sum in distributing his dozens of comics, books, and tracts. Rivera is in some small demand as a speaker and no doubt finds it profitable to play on fears of uninformed Protestants. He operates what he calls the Antichrist Information Center and is available for public talks.

Although most anti-Catholic organizations will not have anything to do with Jack Chick, Chick Publications, or Alberto Rivera, there is one that will. End Time Books, part of the Holy Alamo Christian Church, Consecrated, offers for sale the cassette version of *Smokescreens*. Also for sale are other books advertised by Chick: Edmond Paris’ *The Secret History of the Jesuits*, Avro Manhattan’s *The Vatican-Moscow-Washington Alliance*, and Charles Chiniquy’s *The Priest, the Woman, and the Confessional*.

Tony Alamo is best known for distributing a poster claiming all the major news media “are secretly owned by the Vatican”. At the top of the poster is a large-print “Warning!” It is revealed that in Romanist hands are *Life*, *People*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, three television networks, the Hearst newspaper chain, *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, “and many other local newspapers, T.V. and radio stations”. It seems the Vatican uses these media “to exonerate themselves [*sic*] from crimes they [*sic*] have done and are doing . . . and to

smear and malign who they [sic] will". At the bottom of the poster is a big "Watch out!!"

The poster and the considerable publicity it received were the first most people had heard about what was originally called the Tony & Susan Alamo Christian Foundation, which began as a Christian street ministry in Southern California. It was established by Tony Alamo, a former pop singer, and his wife, Susan. The Alamos moved their operation to Alma, Arkansas, where they built an empire of unrelated businesses. Their holdings even included the largest country-and-western clothing store in Nashville. Members of the Alamo cult worked in its enterprises as "volunteers", thereby allowing Alamo to amass millions.

Susan Alamo died in 1982. Tony was convinced she would be resurrected in short order, and faithful cultists kept round-the-clock vigils, convinced their prayers would bring her back. Just about the time his followers might have begun doubting the likelihood of his wife's imminent return, Alamo hit on a new angle, anti-Catholicism. It was in early 1984 that his posters appeared in at least fifty cities around the country, and not long after came *The Pope's Secrets*, an eight-page, closely spaced explanation of the Vatican's shenanigans. In that booklet the reader learns that a conveniently dead Australian archbishop said "the demands of the holy father (the Pope) are that the public services should be 100% Roman Catholic soon. Care must be taken that no suspicion may be raised when Roman Catholics are secretly given more government jobs than Protestants, Jews, and other heretics." This revelation is followed by quotations from Chick Publications' books.

Next comes a history lesson. After World War II, explains Alamo, the Vatican set up the John Birch Society so the American public would become concerned about communism and would overlook the Vatican's encroachments. The Vatican likewise underwrote "every major terrorist group in the world. The reason for this is to keep people's thoughts on unexplainable, insane tragedies that their [sic] terrorist groups are committing while the Vatican is busy undermining all the governments of the world so they [sic] can have world dominion (papal power). When terrorist news hits, it is so shocking that it minimizes the news of the Vatican taking away the U.S. Constitution and of people being deprived of their religious freedoms." Alamo does not explain how there can be any news of these Catholic usurpations if the Vatican controls the media—but that is a quibble.

There is no reason to recount each of the tales in this flyer. The author

demonstrates an active imagination, one that takes him far beyond what even Alberto Rivera has been able to concoct. Rivera, for instance, was unable to discover the “liquor and wine slave labor camps” run by the Christian Brothers and other religious orders that “unlawfully use free labor (thousands of Roman Catholic monks)”.

In 1985 Tony Alamo remarried. Since it would have been inappropriate for his organization to have continued carrying his former wife’s name, the group is now known as the Holy Alamo Christian Church, Consecrated. (Its literature does not make clear whether the adjective “Holy” is meant to modify “Alamo” or “Church”.)

In a tract called *It Was All a Lie!* the second Mrs. Alamo, Elizabeth, assures the reader that “you can find out all about ‘them’: the Roman Catholic cult, the harlot of Revelation,. . . and about how God has told throughout the entirety of the King James Version of the Holy Bible about her, *as well as her falling*, immediately before the Lord Jesus Christ returns to this earth.”

She explains that “I understand *now* why the Inquisitions and the Crusades were minimized in history classes, why propaganda was supposedly only a ‘Russian tactic’ and why Latin was the mandatory language in junior high school. The conversations I had overheard about Catholicism as a child were absolute truth. The Catholic motto of Satan is obvious—confuse, convince, convert.

If there is any anti-Catholic propaganda that needs to be ignored rather than opposed, it is Tony Alamo’s. His efforts are so extreme they make extremists look moderate. So why not ignore him entirely? Because, like Alberto Rivera and his comic books, this is another example of a fanatic making run-of-the-mill anti-Catholics look good. The public is always willing to accept someone or some organization that appeals to its unrespectable prejudices if it can, at the same time, reject propagandists at the fringe. Alamo may have hornswoggled enough people to work for him for free that he is now a wealthy man, but he really has no substantial following, nor do his ideas.

The work of Chick, Rivera, and Alamo as point men of fundamentalist anti-Catholicism legitimizes Mission to Catholics, the Conversion Center, and the other “moderate” anti-Catholic organizations. The three have allowed the groups that effect conversions to appear reasonable and respectable by distancing themselves from their foolishness. “Moderate” anti-Catholics are

seen as making the necessary distinctions, as thinking the questions through carefully—which is nonsense, but convenient nonsense.

With the election of John F. Kennedy, pundits said nativism was on the wane. The anti-Catholicism that had been a part of America's heritage from the first—and that at times supplicated into political movements such as the Know-Nothings in the 1850s and the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s—was gone, done in by the wisdom of the electorate, and it would not return. But it has returned, in a more virulent strain than has been seen in more than two generations. There have been at least two main causes.

First, fundamentalism itself is having an upsurge. Largely dormant since the Scopes Trial, it has grown rapidly in the last twenty years, partly as a reaction to liberal Protestantism. If liberal Protestantism, as represented by the “mainline” churches, has as its symbol the question mark, fundamentalism has as its symbol the exclamation point. It is attractive because it stands for something, and that something is definite.

The apparent weakness of Catholicism is the second reason the anti-Catholic element in fundamentalism is growing. When Kennedy was elected, few thought of the Church as anything but monolithic. It had come through” the milder anti-Catholic movement of the 1920s with nary a scratch, and in doing so it had confirmed the status of Catholics, who as recently as fifty years before that were, mainly, unwelcome newcomers to America. But the attack on the Church in the 1920s, spearheaded by the Klan (which concentrated its efforts on the Church as represented by immigrants, not on blacks), fizzled because the Church was perceived as being too strong; it seemed to be a fight not worth entering. Not so in recent years. Even fundamentalists who may touch no literature other than the Bible sense the Catholic Church has had problems, and many of them have been led to believe the problems are insurmountable and, in fact, are indicative of its ultimate collapse. They think Catholicism's true nature is finally catching up with it. Like wild dogs that attack only injured prey, professional anti-Catholics have gone after the Church because they sense irresolution. The old Church too easily survived attacks such as theirs. They think they can get away with something now, and they are running hard.

Examples of fundamentalism's darkest side could be repeated without end. There is no need to examine dusty books or yellowed leaflets to find them. They exist in numbers that were unimaginable only a few years ago. For the most part, Catholics have little notion of the depth of anti-Catholic sentiment.

The most fanatic of the anti-Catholics—people such as Chick, Rivera, and Alamo—work on a different level than do garden-variety fundamentalists. The latter do what they do because they seek the truth. They are willing to follow syllogisms to their conclusions, even though they have uncritically followed some badly premised syllogisms to get where they are. They think they have discovered religious truth, and what they have discovered impels them to share it with others and to do whatever is necessary to make others see what they see. Often they take liberties with the facts, although usually they are unconscious of doing so. To them, their arguments seem conclusive. They can discover no weaknesses—although, to be sure, they have not searched particularly hard for any.

They are like political radicals. They have isolated a problem (their own sinfulness, in the case of fundamentalists; society's, in the case of radicals) and are determined to effect a solution. In doing that they will have to remove obstacles that stand in their way. For radicals, the main obstacle has been America itself; for fundamentalists, it is the Catholic Church, an even tougher nut to crack. Radicals willingly put aside other concerns and devote their time to the Cause; it is expected of them. They are defined by their pursuit of what they perceive to be justice. Fundamentalists are equally committed, but they often find themselves doing what others would expect them not to do. Everything about them speaks of reticence, yet they attack what they believe to be the most nefarious institution in the world, certainly the longest lived. Those who cannot fight Rome publicly read about, listen to, and send contributions to those who can.

Few fundamentalists are up in arms about Methodism, Episcopalianism, or Lutheranism, but every fundamentalist is worried about the Catholic Church. His interest first might be piqued by one or more of the fanatics, or he might become aware of the problem by hearing a more respectable fundamentalist preacher or by being given a newsletter from a ministry devoted to saving Catholics from certain doom. He comes to understand it is the Catholic Church that is the embodiment of eschatological evil. His attitude might be one of unadorned hatred—this seems to be ever more popular, or at least ever more public—or it might be a quiet, gentlemanly dislike. In either case, he has put the Catholic Church in a category no other religion or movement can occupy.

If he is a former Catholic, he brings with him all the intellectual and emotional baggage that implies. That often means he will be a fiercer anti-

Catholic than the person brought up as a fundamentalist, perhaps because he feels he has more to atone for, perhaps because he blames the Church for his own failings. Regardless, he fears it as a tool of powers the average Catholic is only dimly aware of, and he considers himself duty bound to help those still in the clutches of Rome.

Chapter 9

Inspiration of the Bible

The Reformers said the Bible is the sole source of religious truth, and its understanding must be found by looking only at the words of the text. No outside authority may impose an interpretation, and no outside authority, such as the Church, has been established by Christ as an arbiter.¹ As heirs of the Reformers, fundamentalists work on the basis of *sola scriptura*,² and they advance this notion at every opportunity. One might think it would be easy for them to explain why they believe this principle.

Yet there is perhaps no greater frustration, in dealing with fundamentalists, than in trying to pin them down on why the Bible should be taken as a rule of faith at all, let alone as the sole rule of faith. It all reduces to the question of why fundamentalists accept the Bible as inspired, because the Bible can be taken as a rule of faith only if it is first held to be inspired and thus inerrant.

Now this is a problem that does not keep most Christians awake at night. Most have never given it any serious thought. To the extent they believe in the Bible, they believe in it because they operate in a milieu that is, if post-Christian in many ways, still steeped in Christian ways of thought and presuppositions. A lukewarm Christian who would not give the slightest credence to the Koran would think twice about casting aspersions on the Bible. It has a certain official status for him, even if he cannot explain it. One might say he accepts the Bible as inspired (whatever that may mean for him) for some “cultural” reason, but that, of course, is hardly a sufficient reason, since on such a basis the Koran rightly would be considered inspired in a Moslem country.

Similarly, it is hardly enough to say that one’s family has always believed in the Bible, “and that’s good enough for me”. It may indeed be good enough for the person disinclined to think, and one should not disparage a simple faith, even if held for an ultimately weak reason, but mere custom cannot establish the inspiration of the Bible.

Some fundamentalists say they believe the Bible is inspired because it is

“inspirational”, but that is a word with a double meaning. On the one hand, if used in the strict theological sense, it clearly begs the question, which is: How do we know the Bible is inspired, that is, “written” by God, but through human authors? And if “inspirational” means nothing more than “inspiring” or “moving”, then someone with a deficient poetic sense might think the works of a poetaster are inspired.

Parts of the Bible, including several whole books of the Old Testament, cannot be called “inspirational” in this sense in the least, unless one works on the principle of the elderly woman who was soothed every time she heard “the blessed word Mesopotamia”.³ One betrays no disrespect in admitting that some parts of the Bible are as dry as military statistics—indeed, some parts *are* nothing but military statistics—and there is little there that can move the emotions.

So, it is not enough to believe in the inspiration of the Bible merely out of culture or habit, nor is it enough to believe in its inspiration because it is a beautifully written or emotion-stirring book. There are other religious books, and even some plainly secular ones, that outscore most of the Bible when it comes to fine prose or poetry.

What about the Bible’s own claim to inspiration? There are not many places where such a claim is made even tangentially, and most books in the Old and New Testaments make no such claim at all. In fact, no New Testament writer seemed to be aware that he was writing under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, with the exception of the author of Revelation. Besides, even if every biblical book began with the phrase “the following is an inspired book”, such phrases would prove nothing. The Koran claims to be inspired, as does the Book of Mormon, as do the holy books of various Eastern religions. Even the writings of Mary Baker Eddy, founder of Christian Science, claim inspiration. The mere claim of inspiration is insufficient to establish a book’s bona fides.

These tests failing, most fundamentalists fall back on the notion that “the Holy Spirit tells me the Bible is inspired”, an exercise in subjectivism that is akin to their claim that the Holy Spirit guides them in interpreting the text. For example, the anonymous author of *How Can I Understand the Bible?* a booklet distributed by the Radio Bible Class, lists twelve rules for Bible study. The first is “seek the help of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit has been given to illumine the Scriptures and make them alive to you as you study them. Yield to his enlightenment.” If one takes this as meaning that anyone asking

for a proper interpretation will be given one by God—and that is exactly how many fundamentalists understand the assistance of the Holy Spirit to work—then the multiplicity of interpretations, even among fundamentalists, should give people a gnawing sense that the Holy Spirit has not been doing his job very effectively.

Most fundamentalists do not say, in so many words, that the Holy Spirit has spoken to them directly, assuring them of the inspiration of the Bible. They do not phrase it like that. Rather, in reading the Bible they are “convicted” that it is the word of God, they get a positive “feeling” that it is inspired, and that’s that—which often reduces their acceptance of the Bible to culture or habit. No matter how it is looked at, the fundamentalist’s position is not one that is rigorously reasoned to. It must be the rare fundamentalist who, even for sake of argument, first approaches the Bible as though it is not inspired and then, on reading it, syllogistically concludes it is. In fact, fundamentalists begin with the fact of inspiration—just as they take the other doctrines of fundamentalism as givens, not as deductions—and then they find things in the Bible that seem to support inspiration, claiming, with circular reasoning, that the Bible confirms its inspiration, which they knew all along.

The man who wrestles with the fundamentalist approach to inspiration at length is unsatisfied because he knows he has no good grounds for his belief. The Catholic position is the only one, ultimately, that can satisfy the intellect. The Catholic method of finding the Bible to be inspired begins this way. The Bible is approached as any other ancient work. It is not, at first, presumed to be inspired. From textual criticism we are able to conclude that we have a text the accuracy of which is more certain than the accuracy of any other ancient work.

Sir Frederic Kenyon notes that

[f]or all the works of classical antiquity we have to depend on manuscripts written long after their original composition. The author who is the best case in this respect is Virgil, yet the earliest manuscript of Virgil that we now possess was written some 350 years after his death. For all other classical writers, the interval between the date of the author and the earliest extant manuscript of his works is much greater. For Livy it is about 500 years, for Horace 900, for most of Plato 1,300, for Euripides 1,600.⁴

Yet no one seriously disputes that we have accurate copies of the works of these writers. Not only are the biblical manuscripts we have older than those for classical authors, we have in absolute numbers far more manuscripts to work from. Some are whole books of the Bible, others fragments of just a

few words, but there are thousands of manuscripts in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Coptic, Syriac, and other languages. What this means is that we can be sure we have an accurate text, and we can work from it in confidence.

Next we take a look at what the Bible, considered merely as a history, tells us, particularly the New Testament, and particularly the Gospels. We examine the account of Jesus' life and death and his reported Resurrection. Using what is in the Gospels themselves, what we find in extrabiblical writings from the early centuries, and what we know of human nature (and what we can otherwise, from natural theology, know of divine nature), we conclude that Jesus either was just what he claimed to be, God, or was a madman, (The one thing we know he could not have been was merely a good man who was not God, because no merely good man would make the claims he made.)

We are able to eliminate his being a madman not just from what he said—no madman ever spoke as he did; for that matter, no sane man ever did either—but from what his followers did after his death, A hoax (the supposedly empty tomb) is one thing, but one does not find people dying for a hoax, at least not one from which they have no prospect of advantage. The result of this line of reasoning is that we must conclude that Jesus indeed rose from the dead and that he was therefore God and, being God, meant what he said and did what he said he would do.

One thing he said he would do was found a Church, and from both the Bible (still taken as merely a historical book, not at this point in the argument as an inspired one) and other ancient works, we see that Christ established a Church with the rudiments of all we see in the Catholic Church today—papacy, hierarchy, priesthood, sacraments, teaching authority, and, as a consequence of the last, infallibility. Christ's Church, to do what he said it would do, had to have the note of infallibility.

We thus have taken purely historical material and concluded that there exists a Church, which is the Catholic Church, divinely protected against teaching error. Now we are at the last part of the argument. That Church tells us the Bible is inspired, and we can take the Church's word for it precisely because the Church is infallible. Only after having been told by a properly constituted authority (that is, one set up by God to assure us of the truth of matters of faith) that the Bible is inspired do we begin to use it as an inspired book.

Here is how Arnold Lunn put it in a 1932 letter to C. E. M. Joad:

We now approach the Bible, and approach it in the same spirit as that in which we should approach any other human document. We do not believe the Bible merely because it is the Bible, but because we are convinced of its veracity by rational inferences similar in kind to those which convince us of other historical facts. We do not, for instance, accept the fact that Christ rose from the dead merely because we find the Resurrection recorded in the Gospels; we accept the Resurrection because, of all theories which have been put forward to explain the origin of Christianity, the only theory which fits all the facts is the theory that Jesus of Nazareth claimed to be God and proved his claim by rising from the dead. . . . The Roman Catholic, then, claims to prove from the Bible, which he is still treating as a purely human document, that Christ intended to found an infallible Church. Where, then, is this Church? The Roman Catholic Church alone possesses, so the Catholic believes, all the “notes” which enable us to distinguish between the Church which Christ founded and its heretical rivals. The Catholic claims to prove by pure reason that Christ was God, that Christ founded an infallible Church, and that the Roman Catholic Church is the church in question. Having travelled thus far by reason unaided by authority, it is not irrational to trust the authority, whose credentials have been proved by reason, to interpret difficult passages in the Bible.⁵

Note that this is not a circular argument. We are not basing the inspiration of the Bible on the Church’s infallibility and the Church’s infallibility on the word of an inspired Bible. That indeed would be a circular argument.

What we have is really a spiral argument. On the first level we argue to the reliability of the Bible as history. From that we conclude an infallible Church was founded. Then we take the word of that infallible Church that the Bible is inspired. It reduces to the proposition that, without the existence of the Church, we could not tell if the Bible were inspired. As Augustine said, “I would not believe in the Gospel if the authority of the Catholic Church did not move me to do so.”⁶

What has just been discussed is not, obviously, the kind of mental exercise people go through before putting trust in the Bible, but it is the only truly reasonable way to do so. Every other way is inferior—psychologically adequate, perhaps, but actually inferior. In mathematics we accept on “faith” that one and one make two and that one, when added to any integer, will produce the next-highest integer. These truths seem elementary to us, and we are satisfied to take such things at face value, but apprentice mathematicians must go through a semester’s course the whole of which is taken up demonstrating such “obvious” truths. Fundamentalists are quite right in believing the Bible is inspired, but their *reasons* for so believing are inadequate because knowledge of the inspiration of the Bible can be based only on an authority established by God to tell us the Bible is inspired, and that authority is the Church.

Here a more serious problem enters. It seems to some that it makes little

difference why one believes in the Bible's inspiration, just so one believes in it. But the basis for one's belief in its inspiration directly affects how one goes about interpreting the Bible. The Catholic believes in inspiration because the Church tells him so—that is putting it bluntly—and that same Church has the authority to interpret the inspired text. Fundamentalists believe in inspiration, although on weak grounds, but they have no interpreting authority other than themselves.

Newman put it this way in an essay on inspiration published in 1884:

Surely then, if the revelations and lessons in Scripture are addressed to us personally and practically, the presence among us of a formal judge and standing expositor of its words, is imperative. It is antecedently unreasonable to suppose that a book so complex, so unsystematic, in parts so obscure, the outcome of so many minds, times, and places, should be given us from above without the safeguard of some authority; as if it could possibly, from the nature of the case, interpret itself. Its inspiration does but guarantee its truth, not its interpretation. How are private readers satisfactorily to distinguish what is didactic and what is historical, what is fact and what is vision, what is allegorical and what is literal, what is idiomatic and what is grammatical, what is enunciated formally and what occurs *obiter*, what is only of temporary and what is of lasting obligation? Such is our natural anticipation, and it is only too exactly justified in the events of the last three centuries, in the many countries where private judgment on the text of Scripture has prevailed. The gift of inspiration requires as its complement the gift of infallibility.⁷

J. Derek Holmes emphasizes that

[t]hroughout his argument Newman never ignored the main point, that since the writing was irregular, inconsistent, or incomplete, it was antecedently highly improbable that it would contain the whole of the revealed Word of God. The Bible did not contain a complete secular history, and there was no reason why it should contain a complete account of religious truth. It was unreasonable to demand an adequate scriptural foundation for Church doctrines, if the impression gained from the Bible was of writers who took solemn and sacred truths for granted and who did not give a complete or full treatment of the sense of revelation. The writings did not reflect all the beliefs of the writer and events were often presented without comment or moral implication.⁸

Fundamentalists' understanding of inspiration directly affects the way they interpret the Bible and the doctrines they discover in it. Many—not all those writing treatises, but some of them and certainly many in the pews—subscribe to what reduces to a dictation theory of inspiration. This is unfortunate, because “a ‘dictation’ theory may seem a natural account of some experiences of the prophets, but it is psychologically incredible when applied to St. Luke writing his prologue or St. Paul writing to Philemon.”⁹ A

suggestion of the troubles faced by fundamentalists who subscribe to the dictation theory or its practical equivalents comes in passages such as 1 Corinthians 1:14-16. Here is what Paul writes: “Thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius; so that no one can say it was in my name you were baptized. (Yes, and I did baptize the household of Stephanas; I do not know that I baptized anyone else.)” Under the dictation theory, with Paul simply transcribing what God whispered in his ear, one would have to conclude God temporarily forgot who it was Paul baptized. Other examples could be given to show that inspiration is more subtle than many people suspect.

Here is another problem. How does one, on fundamentalist terms, decide when more than one interpretation of a particular passage is allowable and when only one can be admitted? The Catholic Church is silent on the proper interpretation of many biblical passages, readers being allowed to accept one of several understandings.

Take, as an example, Jonah’s escapade at sea, which readers often find disturbing. Ronald Knox said “no defender of the sense of Scripture ever pretended, surely, that this was a natural event. If it happened, it was certainly a miracle; and not to my mind a more startling miracle than the raising of Lazarus, in which I take it Catholics are certainly bound to believe. Surely what puts one off the story of Jonah is the element of the *grotesque* which is present in it.”¹⁰ Actually, what happened to Jonah can be looked at three ways, one of which relies on nothing miraculous occurring at all.

The most common interpretation nowadays, and one that is held by indubitably orthodox exegetes, is that the story of the prophet being swallowed and then disgorged by a “great fish” is merely didactic fiction, a grand tale told to establish a religious point. Catholics are perfectly free to take this or a more literal view, but one seldom will find a fundamentalist who thinks of Jonah as allegory or anything of that sort, although he really has no *authority* for opting for one interpretation over another.

Strictly literal interpretations of what happened to Jonah actually come in two forms. One relies on the fact that people apparently have been swallowed by whales and lived to talk about it. In 1891 a seaman, James Bartley, from a ship named the *Star of the East*, was found missing after an eighty-foot sperm whale had been caught. He was presumed drowned. The next day, when the crew cut up the whale, Bartley was discovered alive inside.¹¹ If Jonah’s three days in the whale were counted like Christ’s three days in the tomb, after the

Semitic fashion—that is, parts of three distinct days, but perhaps only slightly more than twenty-four hours total—then it is possible that Jonah could have been coughed up by that great fish just as his story says. This would be a purely natural explanation of the episode.

The other literal interpretation is that Jonah indeed underwent what the story, read as straight history, says he did, but survived only because of a positive miracle, and several different sorts of miracles have been suggested, such as suspended animation on Jonah's part or a fish with a remarkably large air supply and decidedly mild gastric juices.

Related to the problem of inspiration is the problem of the canon of Scripture. What books constitute the Bible? Catholics can repair to the decisions of the Church, most clearly formalized at Trent and at the fourth-century councils at Hippo and Carthage; these produced lists of books that are to be accepted as inspired on the authority of the infallible Church. Inspired books, taken together, form the Bible. That is the Catholic way to answer the question. What does a fundamentalist fall back on?

William G. Most discusses the rather surprising comments made in 1910 by Gerald Birney Smith, professor at the University of Chicago and speaker at that year's Baptist Congress. As Most says, "Smith's frankness was really remarkable. He reviewed every way he knew to determine which books are or are not inspired" and thus to be included in the canon.

Smith explained that "Luther proposed a practical test. . . . The distinction which he actually had in mind was between those writings which have the power to bring men the assurance of forgiveness through Christ and those which have no such power." Luther was of course relying on his doctrine of salvation by faith alone (not, as Paul would have it, salvation by faith, which is a different thing, implying faith is a prerequisite for salvation but by itself insufficient), "Luther thought a book that intensely preaches this doctrine was inspired", explains Most, "otherwise not. Of course, he never provided proof for such a standard. Nor could it be a standard, for Luther, or any other writer, could compose a book that would preach according to Luther's requirements; yet that book need not on that account be inspired."

Smith, continuing his analysis of the Protestant basis for determining the canon, noted that John Calvin, in his *Institutes*, offered a different test: "The word will never gain credit in the hearts of men till it be confirmed by the internal testimony of the Spirit," This claim, too—relying on subjective "feelings"—was useless, Smith said, referring to the assaults on the Bible that

were prevalent even a long lifetime ago. “The application of this test. . . would eliminate the existing distinction between canonical and non-canonical writings more completely than would the most radical conclusions of biblical criticism.” After all, many parts of Scripture do not seem uplifting at all, such as 1 and 2 Chronicles, also known as 1 and 2 Paralipomenon, which, like much of Numbers and Deuteronomy, are dull—not the style of writing that shouts, “I’m inspired!” And some clearly noncanonical and thus noninspired books such as Thomas a Kempis’ *Imitation of Christ* are more moving than many whole books of the Bible.

Most notes that “what Professor Smith demonstrates is that for a Protestant there simply is no way to know which books are inspired. That means, in practice, that a Protestant, if he is logical, should not appeal to Scripture to prove anything; he has no sure: means of knowing which books are part of Scripture!”¹²

One consequence of this inability to ascertain the canon has been that the Protestant Bible is an incomplete Bible. Missing are the books of Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, and the two books of Maccabees, as well as sections of Esther (10:4 to 16:24) and Daniel (3:24-90 and chapters 13 and 14). These are known to Catholics as the deuterocanonical works. They are just as much a part of the Bible as the rest of the Old Testament, the proto-canonical books. Luther rejected the deuterocanonical books and passages largely because they conflicted with his theological theories. In 2 Maccabees 12:46, for instance, it is said that “it is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins”—a reference to purgatory. Such a book had to go—it did not mesh with the Reformer’s doctrines. (Luther even spoke disparagingly about some New Testament books, such as James, but he was unable to find a rationale for removing them from the canon.)

However easy it may have been for the Reformers to say that some books are inspired and thus in the canon, while others are not, they in fact had no solid grounds for making such determinations. Ultimately, an infallible authority is needed if we are to know what belongs in the Bible and what does not. Without such an authority, we are left to our own prejudices, and we cannot tell if our prejudices lead us in the right direction.

The advantages of the Catholic approach to proving inspiration are two. First, the inspiration is really proved, not just “felt”. Second, the main fact behind the proof—the fact of an infallible, teaching Church—leads one

naturally to an answer to the problem that troubled the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:31): How is one to know what interpretations are right? The same Church that authenticates the Bible, that establishes its inspiration, is the authority set up by Christ to interpret his word.

Chapter 10

Tradition Versus “Traditions of Men”

Fundamentalists say the Bible is the sole rule of faith. Everything one needs to believe to be saved is in the Bible, and nothing needs to be added to the Bible. The whole of Christian truth is found within its pages. Anything extraneous to the Bible is simply wrong or hinders rather than helps one toward salvation.

Catholics, on the other hand, say the Bible is not the sole rule of faith and that nothing in the Bible suggests it was meant to be. In fact, the Bible indicates it is not to be taken by itself. The true rule of faith is Scripture and Tradition, as manifested in the living teaching authority of the Catholic Church, to which were entrusted the oral teachings of Jesus and the apostles plus the authority to interpret Scripture rightly.

Vatican II explained the relationship between Tradition and Scripture this way:

Hence there exist a close connection and communication between sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture. For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end. For sacred Scripture is the word of God inasmuch as it is consigned to writing under the inspiration of the divine Spirit. To the successors of the apostles, sacred Tradition hands on in its full purity God's word, which was entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. Thus, by the light of the Spirit of truth, these successors can in their preaching preserve this word of God faithfully, explain it, and make it more widely known. Consequently it is not from sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. Therefore both sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same devotion and reverence.¹

The fundamentalist side usually begins its argument by citing two verses. The first is this: “So much has been written down, that you may learn to believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and so believing find life through his name” (Jn 20:31). The other is this: “Everything in the scripture has been divinely inspired, and it has its uses; to instruct us, to expose our errors, to correct our faults, to educate in holy living” (2 Tim 3:17). Fundamentalists say these verses demonstrate the reality of *sola scriptura*.

Not so, reply Catholics. The verse from John's Gospel tells us only that the Bible was composed so we can be helped to believe Jesus is the Messiah. It does not say the Bible is all we need for salvation, nor does it say the Bible is actually needed to believe in Christ. After all, the earliest Christians had no New Testament to appeal to; they learned from oral, not written, instruction. Until relatively recent times, the Bible was inaccessible to most people, either because they could not read or because printing had not yet been invented. All these people learned from oral instruction, passed down, generation to generation, by the Church. Granted, it would have been advantageous for them to have the Bible at hand also, but it was not necessary for their salvation.

Much the same can be said about 2 Timothy 3:17. To say that all inspired writing "has its uses" is one thing; to say that such a remark means that only inspired *writing* need be followed is something else. Besides, there is a telling argument against the fundamentalists' claim. It is the contradiction that arises out of their own interpretation of this verse. John Henry Newman explained it this way:

It is quite evident that this passage furnishes no argument whatever that the Sacred Scripture, without Tradition, is the *sole rule of faith*; for, although Sacred Scripture is *profitable* for these four ends, still it is not said to be *sufficient*. The Apostle requites the aid of Tradition (2 Thess 2:15). Moreover, the Apostle here refers to the Scriptures which Timothy was taught in his infancy. Now, a good part of the New Testament was not written in his boyhood: some of the Catholic Epistles were not written even when St. Paul wrote this, and none of the Books of the New Testament were then placed on the canon of the Scripture books. He refers, then, to the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and if the argument from this passage proved anything, it would prove too much, viz., that the Scriptures of the New Testament were not necessary for a rule of faith.²

The Bible actually denies that it is the complete rule of faith. John tells us that not everything concerning Christ's work is in Scripture (Jn 21:25), and Paul says that much Christian teaching is to be found in the tradition that is handed down by word of mouth (2 Tim 2:2). He instructs us to "stand fast, and hold the traditions which you have learned, whether by word or by our epistle" (2 Th 2:15). We are told that the first Christians "were persevering in the doctrine of the apostles" (Acts 2:42), which was the oral teaching that was given long before the New Testament was written—and centuries before the canon of the New Testament was settled.

This oral teaching must be accepted by Christians as they accepted the written teaching that at length came to them. "He who listens to you, listens

to me; he who despises you, despises me” (Lk 10:16). The Church, in the persons of the apostles, was given the authority to teach by Christ; the Church would be his stand-in. “Go, therefore, making disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19). How was this to be done? By preaching, by oral instruction: “See how faith comes from hearing, and hearing through Christ’s word” (Rom 10:17). The Church would always be available as the living teacher. It is a mistake to limit Christ’s word to the written word only or to suggest that all his teachings were reduced to writing. The Bible nowhere supports either notion.

After all, God, speaking through Isaiah, promised a living voice in the Church that Christ would establish: “This is my covenant with them, says the Lord: My spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, nor out of the mouth of your children, nor out of the mouth of your children’s children, says the Lord, from now until forever” (Is 59:21). This prophecy must refer to a living Church, the culmination of Israel, and not to a book because no book, not even the Bible, is a living teacher.

The oral teaching would last until the end of time. “But the word of the Lord lasts forever. And this word is nothing other than the Gospel which has been preached to you” (1 Pet 1:25). Note that the word has been “preached”—that is, it was oral. This would endure. It would not be supplanted by a written record like the Bible (supplemented, yes, but not supplanted), but would continue to have its own authority.

In this discussion it is important to keep in mind what the Catholic Church means by Tradition. The term does not mean legends or mythological accounts, nor does it mean transitory customs or practices that come and go as circumstances warrant, such as styles of priestly dress, particular forms of devotion to saints, or even liturgical rubrics. Tradition means the teachings and teaching authority of Jesus and, derivatively, the apostles. These have been handed down and entrusted to the Church (which means to its official teachers, the bishops in union with the Pope). It is necessary that Christians believe in and follow this Tradition as well as the Bible (Lk 10:16). The truth of the faith has been given primarily to the leaders of the Church (Eph 3:5), who, with Christ, form the foundation of the Church (Eph 2:20). The Church has been guided by the Holy Spirit, who protects this teaching from corruption (Jn 14:16),

Paul illustrated what Tradition is: “The chief message I handed on to you,

as it was handed on to me, was that Christ, as the scriptures foretold, died for our sins. . . . That is our preaching, mine or theirs as you will; that is the faith that has come to you” (1 Cor 15:3, 11). He said also, to Timothy, who was a bishop, “Thou hast learned, from many who can witness to it, the doctrine which I hand down; give it into the keeping of men thou canst trust, men who will know how to teach it to others besides themselves” (2 Tim 2:2). In other words, Timothy, one of the successors to the apostles, was to teach what he had learned from his predecessor, Paul. The apostle praised those who followed Tradition: “I must praise you for your constant memory of me, for upholding your traditions just as I handed them on to you” (1 Cor 11:2).

The first Christians “occupied themselves continually with the apostles’ teaching” (Acts 2:42) long before there was a Bible. The fullness of Christian teaching was found, right from the first, in the Church as the living embodiment of Christ, not in a book. The teaching Church, with its oral traditions, was authoritative. Paul himself gives a quotation from Jesus that was handed down orally to him: “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). This saying is not found in the Gospels and must have been passed on to Paul. Indeed, even the Gospels themselves are oral Tradition that has been written down (Lk 1:1-4). What is more, Paul does not quote Jesus only. He also quotes from early Christian hymns, as in Ephesians 5:14. These and other things have been given to Christians “by the command of the Lord Jesus” (1 Th 4:2).

Fundamentalists have objections to all of this, of course. They say Jesus condemned Tradition. They note that Jesus said, “Why is it that you yourselves violate the commandment of God with your traditions?” (Mt 15:3). Paul warned, “Take care not to let anyone cheat you with his philosophizings, with empty phantasies drawn from human tradition, from worldly principles; they were never Christ’s teaching” (Col 2:8). But these verses merely condemn erroneous human traditions, not truths that were handed down orally and entrusted to the Church. These truths are part of what is known as Tradition (with an upper-case “T”, to distinguish it from lower-case human traditions or customs).

Consider Matthew 15:6-9, which fundamentalists often bring up: “So by these traditions of yours you have made God’s laws ineffectual. You hypocrites, it was a true prophecy that Isaiah made of you, when he said, This people does me honor with its lips, but its heart is far from me. Their worship is in vain, for the doctrines they teach are the commandments of men,” At

first glance, this seems to undercut the Catholic position, but look at the context. Jesus was not here condemning all traditions. He condemned only those that made God's word void. In this case, it was a matter of the Pharisees making a pretended dedication of their goods to the Temple so they could avoid using them to support their aged parents. By doing this, they dodged the commandment to "Honor thy father and thy mother" (Ex 20:12).

Elsewhere, Jesus instructed his followers to abide by traditions that are not contrary to God's commandments. "The scribes and the Pharisees, he said, have established themselves in the place from which Moses used to teach; do what they tell you, then, continue to observe what they tell you, but do not imitate their actions, for they tell you one thing and do another" (Mt 23:2-3).

He told the Pharisees that they were hypocrites who "will award to God his tithe, though it be of mint or dill or cummin, and have forgotten the weightier commandments of the law, justice, mercy, and honor; you did ill to forget one duty while you performed the other" (Mt 23:23). In short, Jesus insisted we should follow all legitimate traditions. In all these cases he was referring to traditions in the sense of customs (lower-case tradition), not to Tradition in the sense of the Church's teaching authority (upper-case). The latter is wider than the former and includes it.

The big problem, no doubt, is determining what constitutes authentic Tradition. How do we know that what had been handed down by the Catholic Church is correct doctrine and practice? We know it is correct because Christ promised that the gates of hell would not prevail against the Church. (Mt 16:18), The Church would be indefectible; its official teaching would be infallible. To it, through Peter, Christ gave his own teaching authority (Mt 16:19; 28:18-20).

Under the Old Covenant, it was said, "The lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at this mouth" (Malachi 2:7), Under the New Covenant, Christ sent his Church to teach men and transferred to it the authority the priests of the Old Covenant had. We find Philip the deacon asking the Ethiopian, who was reading Scripture, "Canst thou understand what thou art reading?" The Ethiopian replied, "How could I . . . without someone to guide me?" (Acts 8:30-31). We are reminded that "no prophecy in Scripture is the subject of private interpretation" (2 Pet 1:20). The Bible, while meant to be read by individual Christians, indicates that a divinely appointed guide is needed to get through treacherous passages, of which there are many.

“But the Bible itself says it is the sole rule of faith!” insist fundamentalists. They quote John 5:39, in which it is said, “search the scriptures”, but they do not take the phrase in context. They imagine it to be a command to the reader: “Get your Bible and verify that all Christian truths can be discovered in the plain sense of the text.” That is not what Jesus was saying. He was rebuking disbelieving Jews, not claiming that the Bible is the sole rule of faith. Jesus was pointing out to the Pharisees that the messianic prophecies were fulfilled in him. “If you read Scripture, you can verify this for yourselves!” He was referring to a single theme. This verse cannot be stretched to mean that all religious truth can be found on the surface of the Bible.

Fundamentalists also cite Acts 17:11, which refers to the Bereans, who “welcomed the word with all eagerness, and examined the scriptures, day after day, to find out whether all this was true”. Again, here is a verse taken out of context. What really happened is that these people first had been taught Christianity orally and now checked to see if its claims matched the Old Testament prophecies. The verse does not at all mean one uses the Bible as a checklist for all Christian doctrines. (If it meant that, there would be, again, the problem Newman brought up, that the Old Testament *alone* would be sufficient as a rule of faith, the New Testament unnecessary.)

What fundamentalists often do, unfortunately, is see the word “tradition” in Matthew 15:3 or Colossians 2:8 or elsewhere and conclude that anything termed a “tradition” is to be rejected. They forget that the term is used in a different sense, as in 2 Thessalonians 2:15, to describe what *should* be believed. Jesus did not condemn all traditions; he condemned only erroneous traditions, whether doctrines or practices, that undercut Christian truths. The rest, as the apostles taught, were to be adhered to.

The notion of *sola scriptura* arose when the Reformers rejected the papacy. In doing that they also rejected the teaching authority of the Church. They looked elsewhere for the rule of faith and thought they found it in the Bible. Really, they had no place else to look. By default, the interpretation of the Bible would be left to the individual, as guided by the Holy Spirit.

In theory this may sound fine, but it has not worked well in practice, and that argues against the truth of the theory. Actually, both reason and experience tell us the Bible could not have been intended as each man’s private guide to the truth. If individual guidance by the Holy Spirit were a reality, each Christian would understand the same thing from any particular verse since God cannot teach error. Yet Christians have understood

contradictory things from Scripture—even Christians whose “born-again” experiences cannot be doubted. Indeed, fundamentalists often differ among themselves on what the Bible means. They may agree on most major points, but the frequency and vehemence of their squabbles on lesser matters, which should be just as clear if the Holy Spirit is enlightening them, prove the sacred text cannot explain itself.

Chapter 11

Development of Doctrine

The opening verse of Hebrews reminds us that “in the old days, God spoke to our fathers in many ways and by many means”. This was done, the Greek implies, fragmentarily and under various figures. Man was not handed religious truth as though from a Scholastic theologian, neatly laid out and indexed. There was no antediluvian equivalent of the *Baltimore Catechism*. Doctrines had to be thought out, lived out, even pieced together, over centuries, the great leaps coming through new revelations.

Most fundamentalists will acknowledge that much. They admit there was a real development in doctrine: an initial message, which became clouded, nearly lost, at the Fall, and then progressively fuller explications as God prepared Israel for the Messiah, until finally the apostles were instructed by the Messiah himself. Gregory the Great put it like this: “With the progress of the times the knowledge of the spiritual fathers increased; for, in the science of God, Moses was more instructed than Abraham, the prophets more than Moses, the apostles more than the prophets.”¹

With Christ and the apostles general revelation ended. The clear teaching of the Bible is that after the death of the last apostle no further revelation is to be made.² Christ was the fulfillment of the law of the Old Testament (Mt 5:17) and the ultimate teacher of humanity: “You have one teacher, Christ” (Mt 23:10). The apostles recognized that their task was to pass on, perfectly intact, the faith given to them by the Master: “Thou hast learned, from many who can witness to it, the doctrine which I hand down; give it into the keeping of men thou canst trust, men who will know how to teach it to others besides themselves” (2 Tim 2:2); “It is for thee to hold fast to the doctrine handed on to thee, the charge committed to thee” (2 Tim 3:14).

Keeping to the teaching of the apostles, the Fathers rejected the claims of heretics, such as the Gnostics, to possess secret doctrines or a new revelation. Irenaeus and Tertullian stressed that the fullness of revelation is contained in the doctrines of the apostles, doctrines that are preserved unfalsified through

the succession of bishops. This is not to say that there is not a true progress in the understanding of what has been entrusted to the Church. One cannot prevent men from drawing true inferences from true doctrines. Anyone with a serious interest in Christianity will ask, What does this doctrine imply? How does it relate to that doctrine? How can it be squared with this other belief? How does it relate to changed conditions in the world, to things that were not even dreamt of when the last of the Twelve died? In short, how is any doctrine to be understood, what does a true understanding imply, and what does it exclude?

In answering these questions, the Church develops—we perhaps can say “matures”—doctrines, but it does not alter their essence. It is not a matter of inventing new beliefs, but of clearing up obscurities regarding old ones. Vincent of Lerins, in about 450, explained it this way: “But perhaps someone is saying, Will there then be no progress of religion in the Church of Christ? Certainly there is, and the greatest. . . . But it is truly progress and not a change of faith. What is meant by progress is that something is brought to an advancement within itself; by change, that something is transformed from one thing into another.”³

The fathers of Vatican II explained development in this fashion:

The tradition which comes from the apostles develops in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. For there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down. This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers, who treasure these things in their hearts (Luke 2:19, 51), through the intimate understanding of spiritual things they experience, and through the preaching of those who have received through episcopal succession the sure gift of truth. For, as the centuries succeed one another, the Church constantly moves forward toward the fullness of divine truth until the words of God reach their complete fulfillment in her.⁴

Thomas Aquinas noted that truths that were at one time only implicitly believed are later expressly proposed for belief.⁵ An example of this—an example to which he could not, of course, have had recourse—is the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. It was talked about for centuries and then, at what seemed the opportune moment, formally defined. At any one time, the student of theological history will find, there were more articles to be believed than there had been at any earlier time, but fewer than there were to be later. Clarity is added, but never subtracted. As the world grows old, we have the comfort of more doctrinal security (if we but ask for it) than did our ancestors. This growth in doctrine comes about in various ways. Sometimes it

arises from the prayerful thinking of theologians and appears as the result of obscure disputations or forgotten essays in forgotten journals. More usually it is a matter of old truths being made clearer to avoid misunderstanding or heresies being headed off at the pass.

Consider the doctrine of the Trinity. It is not present on the face of Scripture, not just in the sense that the word Trinity is never used—its first use was by Theophilus of Antioch in 181⁶—but also in the sense that it is by no means obvious, from the surface meaning of the text, that the Holy Spirit is a divine Person. We naturally read back into the Bible the beliefs we already hold, each of us having been instructed in the Faith before ever picking up the Bible. References to the Holy Spirit's divinity seem to jump out at us. If we imagine ourselves as ancient pagans or as present-day non-Christians, coming across the Bible for the first time, we realize that the status of the Holy Spirit is by no means clear. If we think of ourselves as having no recourse to divine Tradition and to the Magisterium of the Church, we can appreciate how easy it must have been for the early pneumatological heresies to arise.

Another example is transubstantiation. In the sixth chapter of John's Gospel the Eucharist is promised. If this chapter is read in conjunction with the accounts of the Last Supper, it is easy to see that the first Christians knew, from the very start, that the bread and wine were transformed into Christ's actual Body and Blood. Though attesting that such a transformation happens, the Bible is silent about *how* it happens. Little wonder, then, that in later years disputes arose concerning the way this mysterious change took place. (Perhaps the greatest wonder is that there was no serious opposition to the Real Presence at all until the writings of Berengarius of Tours, who lived in the eleventh century.)

Not until 1215, at the Fourth Lateran Council, was the term transubstantiation imposed, the imposition being not so much the addition of something new as the exclusion of various false explanations. This tongue twister was the only term that eliminated wrong (but seemingly right) explanations of the mystery, that gave equivocating opponents of it no room to hide. From the Gospels Christians knew that the Real Presence was real, and, had they given no thought at all to the matter for the succeeding twelve centuries, no definition would have been required at Lateran IV for the simple reason that no disputes would have arisen regarding what the doctrine really meant. But because people did put their minds to the matter, because

they did try to draw true inferences from true doctrines, and because not all of them were adept at that, disputes did arise, and a formal definition was necessary.

Another example. The Council of Nicaea responded to the most damaging ancient heresy, Arianism, by adopting the non-scriptural word *homoousios* (“same substance”) and contrasting it with *homoiousios* (“like substance”).⁷ Christ was of the same substance as the Father, not merely of a like substance—that is, he was himself divine, not just the most favored of creatures. The Church had come, finally, to a full, or at least a sufficiently full, understanding of Christology and was able to say authoritatively, “On this subject, the Bible and Tradition mean *this*.”

As these cases and innumerable others demonstrate, doctrinal questions can remain in a state of suspense for years. The Church has never felt the need to define formally what there has been no particular pressure to define. This strikes many, particularly non-Catholics, as odd. Why were things not cleared up in, say, the year 100 so folks could know what to believe? Why did Rome issue no laundry list of definitions in the early days and let it go at that? Why was no end run made around all these troubles that plagued Christianity precisely because things were unclear? The remote reason is that God has had his own timetable and an excellent rationale (to which we are not privy) for keeping to it. A more immediate reason is that Rome, meaning the Magisterium of the Church, could not define what it did not know. This returns us to the subjects of infallibility and inspiration. The Pope and the bishops, when teaching in union with him, are infallible in defining dogmas, but infallibility works only negatively. Papal *ex cathedra* pronouncements and ecumenical councils are, through the intervention of the Holy Spirit, prevented from teaching what is untrue, but they are not forced to teach what *is* true.

The Pope and the bishops are not inspired the way the authors of Scripture or the prophets were. To make a new definition, to clear up some dogmatic confusion, they first must use reason, operating on what is known to date, to be able to teach more precisely what is to be held as true. They cannot teach what they do not know, and they have no access to oracular shortcuts. The one great advantage they have over their ancient predecessors in the papacy and episcopacy, over theologians such as Augustine and Aquinas, is that they begin with a more clearly defined body of doctrine. Augustine did not have the advantage of a conciliar decree on transubstantiation; Aquinas could not

refer to one on papal infallibility. They could not very well reason *from* such formalized doctrines to the doctrines' natural implications, at least not in the way now possible. One cannot reach a legitimate conclusion unless the premises are first safe in hand, and if the premises are relatively few, conclusions, no matter how excellent, will also be few.

This chapter has gotten this far with hardly a word about charges by fundamentalists, but there has been a purpose in the delay. Fundamentalists' confusion can be perceived most readily if the Catholic position on doctrinal development is discussed first. Consider what Bill Jackson, head of Christians Evangelizing Catholics, says: "The Roman Catholic Church likens itself to a flower box in which many seeds have been planted. They are God's revelations to men; some have just come up, others are blossoming, etc. They claim these seeds were all planted by Christ, but that they develop at different times depending on the need of the Church." He argues that "the first error is saying Christ planted the seeds. Many important Roman Catholic doctrines have no scriptural basis—Immaculate Conception, Assumption, Purgatory, etc. The next error is to suppose that any need was not provided for the infant church. Paul said he preached the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). How could he, if some of God's truths were in seed form buried beneath the earth? Scripture was given by inspiration of God (2 Tim 3:16). He never changes; God's Truth never changes. Any development of doctrine is of human or satanic origin."⁸

Jackson thinks the Catholic Church believes in time-delayed revelation. Entirely new religious beliefs are just waiting to sprout—and will, as soon as Rome is properly watered. It is his flower-box analogy that leads Jackson astray. This analogy fundamentalists picked up from Catholic apologists. Catholics thought that by using it they were making doctrinal development clearer, but fundamentalists thought the analogy was an admission of something the Church does not in fact believe. The analogy, despite its seeming clarity, can lead one astray. It is, in fact, simply inadequate to explain doctrinal development.

Joseph Tixeront, referring to Catholic apologists in his *History of Dogmas*, put it like this: "Generally scholars have been too easily satisfied with vague formulas and mere comparisons, which are not precise enough (the child who becomes a man, the kernel that becomes a tree, etc.). For the question to be answered in a technical and adequate manner is this: When is an idea or a doctrine a mere development of another idea or doctrine, and when is it to be

considered a substantial alteration or transformation of it?”⁹ Frank Sheed had a similar thought when he wrote against using the shamrock as an explanation of the Trinity.¹⁰ The shamrock does not help us understand the doctrine, he said; it just helps us swallow it. And the analogy of seeds too easily permits fundamentalists to imagine the Catholic Church teaches that entirely new doctrines, unrelated to existing ones, are going to pop up at any time.

If Jackson misconstrues the Catholic position, at least he looks for it, which is more than can be said for most fundamentalists. He makes some effort to give the Catholic view. Like all fundamentalists, he finally falls back on the standard line, which is that what Catholics call doctrinal development is nothing more than a centuries-old accumulation of pagan beliefs and rites. The Catholic Church has not really refined the original deposit of faith; instead, it has added to it from the outside. In its hurry, particularly in the early centuries, to enlarge the membership rolls, it let just about anybody in the door—and when existing inducements were not enough, it adopted pagan ways to get pagans to “convert”. Each time the Church did this it moved further away from real Christianity.

As an example of this thinking, consider Christmas. Strict fundamentalists do not observe Christmas, and not only because the name of the feast is inescapably “Christ Mass”. Some say they disapprove of it because there is no proof Christ was born on December 25; they say he could not have been born then because the shepherds, who were in the fields with their sheep, did not put sheep into the fields during winter. Still others note the Bible is silent about the Feast of Christmas. But these are all prolegomena. The real reasons are that Christmas was established, quite indisputably, by the Catholic Church (which is bad enough) and that the Church superimposed this holy day on a pagan festival (which is worse). Connections are made to Chaldean and Babylonian worship, Zoroastrianism, even Anglo-Saxon rites. Santa Claus is unmasked as nothing but a commercialized version of Catholicism’s St. Nicholas. As Donald F. Maconaghie of the Conversion Center writes in a tract distributed to his mailing list, “No one who acknowledges the supreme authority of the Holy Scriptures to direct in all questions of doctrine and practice will have any fellowship in Xmas [*sic*] celebrations after his attention has been called to the matter, unless he does it deliberately in selfwill.”¹¹

Fundamentalists complain that the Church transformed pagan festivals into

Christian feasts, and such an association with paganism, they think, is conclusive proof of Rome's compromising. They quote with relish John Henry Newman's seemingly damaging admission:

We are told in various ways by Eusebius, that Constantine, in order to recommend the new religion to the heathen, transferred to it the outward ornaments to which they had been accustomed in their own. It is not necessary to go into a subject which the diligence of Protestant writers has made familiar to most of us. The use of temples, and these dedicated to particular saints, and ornamented on occasions with branches of trees; incense, lamps, and candles; votive offerings on recovery from illness; holy water; asylums; holydays and seasons, use of calendars, processions, blessings on the fields; sacerdotal vestments, the tonsure, the ring in marriage, turning to the East, images at a later date, perhaps the ecclesiastical chant, and the Kyrie Eleison, are all of pagan origin, and sanctified by their adoption into the Church.^{[12](#)}

Fundamentalists forget that even paganism had some truth mixed in with its error. Christianity took those elements of truth, removed erroneous associations so that they ceased to be pagan, and made use of the purified truth the better to express Christian notions. Christianity gave new meanings to old things, and in the process the pagan connections ceased. It was a matter of outright replacement, not compromise.

Another good, although strained, example of the fundamentalist attitude may be found in a sermon by the Rev. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, who says the problem with Rome "is not so much a matter of 'denial' of the truth, but rather such an addition to the truth that eventually it becomes a departure from it". To admittedly orthodox teachings "she 'adds,' with a damnable plus, things which are utterly unscriptural and which, indeed, become a denial of the Scripture". There follows a litany more hysterical than usual for fundamentalists, Lloyd-Jones going so far as to insist the Church "teaches her people to worship images" (most fundamentalists just say this is the natural result, although perhaps not the intent, of Church teachings). With respect to beliefs that are peculiarly Catholic, Lloyd-Jones says that "there is not a word about [them] in the New Testament". Part of his problem is that he thinks the Catholic Church teaches that "she has received 'continuing revelation' "—Bill Jackson's seeds again. "She does not believe, as true Protestants do, that revelation ended with what we have in the New Testament."^{[13](#)}

Give him partial points. It is true that Catholics do not think revelation ended with what is in the New Testament. They believe, though, that it ended with the death of the last apostle. The part of revelation that was not committed to writing—the part that is outside the New Testament and is the

oral teaching that is the basis of Tradition—*that* part of revelation Catholics also accept, and in this they follow the apostle Paul’s injunction: “Stand firm, then, brethren, and hold by the traditions you have learned, in word or in writing, from us” (2 Th 2:14). If Lloyd-Jones thinks the Church believes in a continuing revelation, he has not bothered to study the first chapter of any elementary theological work by a Catholic. Every discussion of revelation notes that revelation ended when the last apostle died. Lloyd-Jones’ trouble, the trouble of all fundamentalists, is that he labors under the misconception that Scripture has the last word and that the Tradition built on oral teaching counts for nothing.

One of the keenest arguments against the fundamentalists’ “Bible only” position was given by Newman in *Tract 85*, written while he was still an Anglican. This is the way J. M. Cameron summarizes Newman’s argument in his introduction to Newman’s *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*;

The argument is directed towards the Protestant critic of Tractarianism and in a simplified form goes like this. You criticize the Tractarians for teaching such doctrines as, for example, the Apostolic Succession of bishops or that the Eucharist is a sacrifice, and your criticism rests on the contention that these doctrines are not plainly and unambiguously contained in Scripture and may not indeed be in the Bible at all. I concede, goes the reply, that these doctrines are not to be found in the letter of Scripture or on its surface. But this is just as true of other doctrines you as an orthodox Protestant believe quite firmly; such doctrines as, let us say, the Godhead of the Holy Spirit or that Holy Scripture contains all that is sufficient for salvation. Neither of these doctrines is contained on the surface of Scripture, and there would even be logical difficulties in supposing that Scripture contained the latter doctrine. It seems to me that you ought in consistency to believe less than you do or more than you do. If you confine yourself to what is contained in Scripture then the content of your belief will be thin and even incoherent and you will have no rationale for giving the Bible this supreme position. What you do, inconsistently, believe (for you are not, thank God, a Unitarian) is a warrant for your going further and adopting as your criterion the tradition of the first few centuries and using this tradition, embodied in the formularies of the Church, as that in the light of which Scripture is to be read and understood. You must either move upwards into Catholicism or downwards into unbelief. There is no midway point of rest.¹⁴

Newman noted that, in any century, what was believed by the Catholic Church can be seen to be the logical and necessary outgrowth and the deeper understanding of what was believed the century before. Going backward, from the nineteenth century to the very early Middle Ages, is easy. No one really doubts that what was called the Catholic Church in 1845, when Newman wrote, was the same institution that took that name in, say, 845. (Newman wrote, of course, before the definitions of the Immaculate

Conception, papal infallibility, and the Assumption, three of the main “unscriptural” doctrines pointed at by fundamentalists, but his argument is just as valid, just as useful, today.)

The hard part concerns the early centuries, but, if one examines these in sequence, he sees a natural progression, a true growth in doctrine. There is no change of course, but a continuation along a single road. Something is clarified in one century, and in the next that clarification is investigated and built on so that a further clarification is produced. On and on it goes. What was determined with finality in the past is kept—there is no jettisoning of old doctrines for new—but fuller understandings are added. Thus, the few biblical references to Mary result in the splendid devotion to the Mother of God that was a hallmark of the medieval Church, best exemplified, perhaps, by the monument that is Notre Dame Cathedral.

Newman’s is not the final word on the development of doctrine, not by any means, but his is a tour de force that should be savored by anyone who wants to be able to give more than just a pat answer to fundamentalists who say today’s peculiarly Catholic doctrines have nothing to do with the beliefs of the early Church. His argument is too refined and too large to be used in regular apologetic work, but at least the book can be recommended to fundamentalists who are serious about learning how the Catholic Church views doctrinal development and to Catholics who want to savor fine prose and finer theological thinking. As in so many matters, there is no better teacher than Newman.

Chapter 12

Fanciful Histories of Catholicism

If few fundamentalists know the history of their own religion—and distressingly few do—even fewer have any appreciation for the history of the Catholic Church. They become easy prey for purveyors of fanciful histories that claim to account for the origin and advance of Catholicism. These histories take two basic forms. One makes the legalization of Christianity during the reign of the Emperor Constantine the determining fact; the other looks to the influence of the ancient mystery religions. Both conclude Catholicism is part Christian, part pagan, and wholly to be rejected.

The first version seems more like real history and is generally the more convincing, at least to readers with some schooling, while the second plays better to people who look for sensationalism and depends for its effect on superficial similarities between Catholicism and pagan cults.

The first, which might be called the “pagan convert” theory, begins, most commonly, with a listing of Catholic “inventions”. These are doctrines or practices that the Church allegedly adopted for the most part from paganism long after apostolic times. The first thing to notice is that in any list of “inventions” doctrines are mixed up with practices, fundamentalist writers apparently not understanding the difference.

A doctrine is a fixed belief, a dogma, such as (to limit it to peculiarly “Catholic” doctrines) the Immaculate Conception, the Assumption, purgatory, the sacraments, transubstantiation. Practices, on the other hand, are changeable. They are customs, ways of doing things. They include, for instance, rituals or dress or habits of prayer that may change over the years: the language of the Mass, the style of priestly vestments, the use or nonuse of incense during Mass, making the sign of the Cross. Of course, these practices are connected with doctrines, but they are not themselves doctrines. It is immaterial that many practices are present neither in the Bible nor in early Christian history. Practices are not the subject, of revelation, the way doctrines are; they are adopted as present needs require and are dropped for

the same reason.

To continue with the first kind of “history”: Fundamentalist writers begin by listing “inventions”, mixing doctrines and practices indiscriminately. They then assign dates of origin to them. They generally claim the “inventions” postdate the Edict of Milan, which was issued in 313 and made Christianity legal in the Roman Empire. This is the cutoff date, all the bad things in Catholicism supposedly arising after that point. In fact, the dating of the “inventions” is often grossly wrong or, where right, irrelevant to the point in question, which is: When did Catholicism begin?

For instance, transubstantiation is usually assigned to the Fourth Lateran Council, held in 1215. This, say fundamentalists, was when the doctrine was “invented”. Wrong. This was when the technical term “transubstantiation” was settled on as the right term to use to describe the doctrine of the Real Presence, which, in the writings of the Fathers of the Church, can be shown to antedate Constantine’s reign. In fact, the doctrine can be proved from John 6. So, the year 1215 *does* concern transubstantiation, but it is not the date when the doctrine underlying the term was first believed.

After presenting a list of “inventions”, anti-Catholic writers cite John Henry Newman’s admission, quoted in the previous chapter, that many Catholic customs are of pagan origin,¹ What Newman said is quite true, naturally, and merely demonstrates that some kinds of Catholic practices are common to many liturgical religions. By the way, it is worth pointing out that fundamentalist writers usually misquote this passage from Newman; for instance, they tend to leave out “the ring in marriage”. After all, giving rings in marriage is something they do in their own churches, and they do not want to be reminded that the practice is pagan in origin, as are other elements of their wedding ceremonies.

After listing the “inventions” and quoting Newman, the fundamentalist writers get to history proper. They say that until the reign of Constantine, all was well with Christianity. It remained essentially intact, although there were a few minor heresies in the three centuries following Pentecost. The early Christians, they say, took the Bible alone as their guide. They were not Protestants, and they were certainly not Catholics. They were just Christians. They faced persecution, first from the Jews, later from the Roman Empire. The persecution ended when, through the Edict of Milan, Constantine legalized Christianity.

It was either then or, decades later, when Christianity was made the official

religion of the Empire that, as Loraine Boettner phrased it,

thousands of people who still were pagans pressed into the church in order to gain special advantages and favors that went with such membership. They came in in far greater numbers than could be instructed or assimilated. Having been used to the more elaborate pagan rituals, they were not satisfied with the simple Christian worship but began to introduce their heathen beliefs and practices. Gradually, through the neglect of the Bible and the ignorance of the people, more and more heathen ideas were introduced until the church became more heathen than Christian.²

But there were still “real” Christians, few in number, often in hiding, who kept the Faith through the centuries, until, at the Reformation, they gained a certain ascendancy. The spiritual heirs of these people are today’s fundamentalists.

This outline of ecclesiastical history, as given by Boettner and others, depends for its support on several things. The most important is dating. The theory is that all was well with the Church until Constantine gave it political preference. Yet if all was well with Christianity prior to 313—if it had not yet transmogrified into Catholicism—we should expect to find all the peculiarly Catholic doctrines and practices arising only after that date. Before that, the historical record should show us a Christianity un-distinguishable from present-day fundamentalism. This is what fundamentalist commentators imply is the case, as they list dozens of Catholic “inventions”, each allegedly arising after 313.

Now it would have to be conceded that fundamentalists would have at least a superficial case if all the “inventions” they list *did* first develop after Christianity was legalized. If, in the first three centuries of Christian history, we could find no distinctively Catholic beliefs or practices, that would be an argument in favor of fundamentalism. When we look at ecclesiastical history, what do we really find? We see many of these peculiarly Catholic practices, and virtually all of the peculiarly Catholic doctrines, are mentioned in works written during the first, second, and third centuries. Some of the references are, admittedly, sparse, but others are surprisingly full, referring to these doctrines and practices as already being old. We find mention of a sacrificing priesthood, a hierarchy of bishops, prayers for the dead, the veneration of saints, and much more—enough, at any rate, to demolish the fundamentalists’ attempt at history.

This story about Constantine and the supposed influx of paganism into the Church might be called the standard fundamentalist history: bare bones, not

backed up with facts, ignorant of when the doctrines and practices really came into existence. Still, it is not an unreasonable theory, just a wrong one. If the datings were right, there would be merit to it.

There is a more exotic history that often is seen as a supplement to the standard one. It might be called the “Whore of Babylon” theory. Its best-known proponent is Ralph Woodrow, author of *Babylon Mystery Religion*. Instead of attributing the existence of Catholicism to Christianity’s legalization by Constantine, Woodrow and authors of like-minded works concentrate on superficial similarities between Catholicism and the ancient mystery religions, particularly the Babylonian cults. They make the logically false argument that similarity implies descent, and they pile up hundreds of examples, not one of which, in isolation, proves anything, but which, taken all together, persuade the ignorant by sheer volume.

To understand how wrong these fundamentalist writers are, one needs to understand a little about the religions that predated Christianity. There were, of course, the religions of Rome and Greece, which were unable to satisfy men’s hunger for God. The Roman religion was moralistic, concerned largely with inculcating civic virtue, but it lacked anything that could capture the imagination. The Greek religion was nonmoral (indeed, the Greek gods were often quite immoral), but it left more room for the imagination. The Greek religion was rejected by the best minds of Greece, who turned from it to philosophy, which, while taking many wrong turns, did at last make some progress, declaring the supremacy of the spiritual while adopting a false view of matter.

Then came the mystery religions, which promised to rescue men from the puerility of the traditional Greco-Roman cults. These religions, coming into the Empire from the East beginning about three centuries before Christ, included the cults of Isis from Egypt, Adonis from Babylonia, Attis from Phrygia, and Mithra from Persia. They seem to have arisen through personifications of nature, particularly birth and death as seen in the cycles of the seasons. Commonly, the resurrected gods had been sent from heaven, or the abode of the gods, to “save” humanity. These cults were clothed in luxurious rituals and impressed people brought up on the desiccated religions of Rome and Greece or on philosophy, which seemed to have run into a dead end. What made the mystery cults particularly attractive was that they offered the two things people in the Empire most wanted, the assurance of personal immortality and union with God, what could be called salvation. This

salvation was achieved by being initiated into the mysteries, or secret teachings, of a cult. After the initiation, which usually came through a kind of baptism, the new converts participated in a ceremony that reenacted the death and rebirth of the god.

These cults bore marked, though superficial, resemblance to Catholicism, which is what fundamentalist writers have played on. They also bore marked resemblance to fundamentalism, at least in things that Catholicism and fundamentalism hold in common, and this is something always overlooked in anti-Catholic writings. If the truth of Catholicism is undercut by similarities to mystery religions, so is the truth of fundamentalism. If Catholicism happens to have more points of similarity with paganism, it is not because it is more likely to have grown from these cults, but because it is a broader religion. Looked at another way, Catholicism is full-blown Christianity, while fundamentalism is truncated Christianity, so there exist more aspects in Catholicism to which there could be parallels in paganism. If the existence of similarities means Catholicism is false, the same conclusion must be drawn about fundamentalism; in this regard they sink or swim together.

That, anyway, is an overview of the pagan religions in the Roman Empire of the first century. It is from them, particularly from the mystery cults, that Woodrow insists Catholicism sprang. Most of his proofs are laughable; all of them are unworthy of serious consideration. Yet he can claim to have sold a quarter of a million copies of his book since it appeared in 1966—no mean feat and one that demonstrates that anti-Catholic sentiment is not only alive and well among fundamentalists and evangelicals, but that many of our separated brethren are concerned enough about the Catholic Church to turn to books that purport to deal with its origins. They want to learn how this strange growth developed.

A thirst for scholarship is not the only reason, not even the main reason, people buy this book. The main attraction is a kind of prurience. *Babylon Mystery Religion* does not have much to say about sex; it is not prurient in the most common connotation of the word. It is prurient according to the other dictionary definition in that it satisfies restless cravings many people have. They want to believe there is a dark secret to Catholicism, and they want to be let in on the secret. They want to luxuriate in horror stories, and they want their worst suspicions confirmed. Woodrow's book shows that Catholicism's success has been due not to its merits, but to influence-peddling, fortuitous events, and underhanded dealings, even violence. It demonstrates that

Catholicism is really something dark and alien to Christianity—something, in fact, connected with Christianity only tangentially, not essentially. Woodrow’s thesis, which is not new to him, is that Catholicism’s distinctive elements have not been derived from authentic Christianity. They are not legitimate developments, but wholesale borrowings from pre-Christian cults. This is how the back cover of the book explains it:

Babylon Mystery Religion is a detailed Biblical and historical account of how, when, why, and where ancient paganism was mixed with Christianity. From the early days of Babylon and the legends surrounding Nimrod, Semiramis, and Tammuz, certain rites and rituals are traced in their various developments, thus providing clues whereby the “mystery” is solved! The apostles had predicted that there would come a “falling away” and the proof of their prediction is now evident in history. With such evidence in hand, all true believers should seek, as never before, the simplicity found in Christ himself and to earnestly contend for that original faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

Babylon Mystery Religion is indebted to Alexander Hislop’s *The Two Babylons*, first published in 1853 and reprinted innumerable times since. In fact, Woodrow’s book would not be described wrongly as a revised version of Hislop’s. The argument is that things that distinguish Catholicism from Protestantism—such as the papacy, intercession of the saints, and purgatory—are really borrowings from ancient pagan religions. With sketches, photographs, woodcuts, and a host of one-liners, Woodrow attempts to show this. From Egyptian devotion to Isis, the reader is told, comes Catholic devotion to Mary, and from Buddhism comes the sign of the Cross. St. Bridget never existed, but was merely a replacement for a fertility goddess, Lent was derived from festivals in honor of the death and resurrection of Tanimuz.

Woodrow searched for coincidences, found some, and concludes that similarity implies descent. That, of course, is simply illogical. His demonstration that distinctive Catholic beliefs were taken from Egyptian, Babylonian, or Roman religions will convince no one acquainted with ancient or ecclesiastical history. His proofs are nothing more than a listing of similarities, and even then the similarities are often strained. He unconsciously sums up his technique as he decries the Catholic tendency to erect magnificent churches with bell towers. Wanting to show the use of towers comes from the Babylonians and the Tower of Babel, he begins by saying, “If the reader will permit us a certain liberty at this point. . . .”³ But by “this point”, already a quarter of the way through the text, the book is

nothing but a concatenation of liberties, and Woodrow has taken them about as far as they can go.

Here is an example. In the chapter on the Mass, there is a photograph of the interior of St. Peter's. As the text explains, it "shows the altar of St. Peter's and [the] huge canopy (the baldachinum [sic])—ninety-five feet high—which is supported by four columns, twisted and slightly covered by branches. At the top of the columns—'on high above' the most important altar in Catholicism—are sun-images like those that were used in pagan worship."⁴

Here the reader glances to the opposing page. The photograph has superimposed on it three arrows. Two point to these "sun-images" at the top of the columns. The "sun-images" are so indistinct that Woodrow has penned in, next to the arrows, little "happy face" suns so the reader will understand what is supposed to be present. The third arrow points to the apse. There, "high on the wall, as the photograph also shows, is a huge and elaborate golden sunburst image which, from the entrance of the church, also appears 'above' the altar. . . . Interestingly enough, the great temple at Babylon also featured a golden sun-image."⁵

This is his proof: he sees what he thinks is a "sunburst" and promptly deduces that Catholicism borrowed from the Babylonian cults. It is safe to say that Woodrow has never been to the Vatican and has never examined a clear photograph of the interior of the basilica. If he had, he would not have committed such a blunder. What he thinks is an "elaborate golden sunburst" on the far wall of St. Peter's is nothing less than a representation of the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove exuding rays of light. (Even fundamentalists use the dove motif in artwork.) The dove hovers over the reliquary said to contain St. Peter's chair. This is perhaps the most famous piece of art in the church—certainly the most eye-catching after the baldachin—and this blunder is representative of Woodrow's book. All in all, his contribution to the religious debate is a sorry example of "a detailed and historical account of how, when, why, and where ancient paganism was mixed with Christianity".

There is no need to refute each claim or explain each comparison made by Woodrow. His method is crude, and his book is unworthy of a point-by-point reply. A Catholic, if so inclined, could find in the mystery religions enough similarities to fundamentalism to prove that fundamentalism is really an offshoot of the cults, but the proof would be worthless. He could demonstrate that some mystery religions venerated a holy book as containing all religious

truth (their version of *sola scriptura*), just like fundamentalism. He could illustrate how the mystery religions claimed to give an “assurance of salvation”, just like fundamentalism. Such similarities would establish nothing. They would not imply descent.

When they look at the mystery religions, writers such as Woodrow think that by using Catholic terms as labels for pagan practices they have shown Catholicism’s origin. That simply is not logical, but, no matter how weak these arguments may be in the abstract, they influence people. Should they? No, because we should expect the true religion to be a fulfillment of, but not a complete contradiction of, mankind’s earlier stabs at religious truth. After all, each ancient religion had something true in it, even if what was true was buried under much that was false and even pernicious. On the positive side, ancient religions were remote preparations for Christ’s coming, which occurred in the “fullness of time”, when mankind had taken itself about as far as it could go on its own.

We should expect that the religion that is the fullness of truth, coming in the “fullness of time”, would incorporate the good points of earlier religions while rejecting their errors. Conversely, a religion that rejected not only the errors, but also the good points, of earlier religions would seem to be incomplete, as though it went too far in trying to remain pure, as though it threw out more than just the bathwater.

Chapter 13

Salvation

There is no more confusing topic, when fundamentalists and Catholics sit down to talk, than salvation. It goes beyond the standard question posed by fundamentalists: “Have you been saved?” It also means “don’t you wish you had an assurance of salvation?” Fundamentalists, along with most evangelicals, think they do. They are absolutely sure they will go to heaven immediately after death, and their assurance is no less lively than is the assurance of the Moslem participant in a jihad, who thinks he will be translated to seventh heaven (with all its houris) if he dies in battle.

Catholics are prone to label this presumption, but that really is not what it is. In Catholic theology, presumption is the attitude that one can gain heaven by his own merits or can gain pardon without repentance. It often manifests itself in a belief that one will be given an opportunity, at the last moment, to make amends—to get to confession, to say a perfect act of contrition—all based on the idea that one has led a reasonably good life. It is a kind of gambling, with the last throw of the dice guaranteed to come up right, and it is a sin because there is no reason to think things will happen that way, and to presume on one’s salvation is to play fast and loose with one’s soul. It is the most terminal form of Russian roulette.

Fundamentalists do not look at the matter as though they were playing a game. They conclude from the Bible that Christ actually promised that heaven is theirs in exchange for a remarkably simple act. All they have to do, at just one point in their lives, is “accept Christ as their personal Savior”. Then it is done. They may live exemplary lives thereafter, but living well is not crucial. It does not affect their salvation.

No matter what happens later, no matter how evilly they might live the remainder of their days, their salvation is assured. Granted, the Holy Spirit might punish them in this life for their sins (here fundamentalists take a rather Old Testament view on why one ought to be good—to avoid temporal evils, not to gain heaven, which is guaranteed no matter what). But in no way can

they undo their salvation, because it has nothing at all to do with the intrinsic worth of their souls or with what Catholics term actual sins.

It comes down to Galatians 2:20: “The Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me”. Christ is seen as one’s *personal* Savior, and that is why these words are a favorite with fundamentalists. For them, everything depends on an inner conviction that Christ died for them personally, and this verse is the ideal expression of it. Curiously, though, it stands alone in the apostle’s writings. Everywhere else he insists that Christ gave himself for *us*, and that he died for *us*. Paul was a churchman and sought salvation through the Church.

Kenneth E. Hagin, a Protestant evangelist, notes that this assurance of salvation comes through being “born again”: “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (Jn 3:3). “The new birth”, says Hagin, “is a necessity to being saved. Through the new birth you come into the right relationship with God.” There are many things that this new birth is not.

The new birth is not: confirmation—church membership—water baptism—the taking of sacraments—observing religious duties—an intellectual reception of Christianity—orthodoxy of faith—going to church—saying prayers—reading the Bible—being moral—being cultured or refined—doing good deeds—doing your best—nor any of the many other things some men are trusting in to save them.

Those who have obtained the new birth “did the one thing necessary—they accepted Jesus Christ as personal Savior by repenting and turning to God with the whole heart as a little child”.¹ And that was all they needed to do.

For Catholics, salvation depends on the state of the soul at death. Christ has already redeemed us, unlocked the gates of heaven, as it were. (Note that redemption is not the same as salvation but is a necessary prelude.) He did his part, and now we have to cooperate by doing ours. If we are to pass through those gates, we have to be in the right spiritual state. We have to be spiritually alive. If a soul is merely in a natural state, without sanctifying grace, which is the grace that gives it supernatural life, then it is dead supernaturally and incapable of enjoying heaven. It will not be allowed through the gates. But if it has sanctifying grace, then heaven is guaranteed even if a detour through purgatorial purification is required first. The Church teaches that only souls that are objectively good and objectively pleasing to God merit heaven, and such souls are ones filled with sanctifying grace.

The saint who never committed a mortal sin and the lifelong sinner who did not stop sinning until he repented on his deathbed will each gain heaven,

although the one will have to be cleansed in the anteroom of purgatory. When they get to heaven, the one with the greater capacity for love will enjoy greater blessedness there, although each will enjoy it as fully as he is capable. As Catholics see it, anyone can achieve heaven, and anyone can lose it. The lifelong sinner can remain that to the very end—and he then becomes an eternally lost sinner. The apparent saint can throw away salvation at the last moment and end up no better off than the man who never did a good deed in his life. It all depends on how one enters death, which is why dying is by far one's most important act.

To some it seems arbitrary that God would put the main emphasis on one's last moments, which may come entirely by surprise, but this reality is tempered by the fact that everyone is given a chance to repent—and not just a chance, but a succession of chances. Grace abounds and can always be grabbed if only reached for. God does everything short of getting down on his knees in front of us and begging us to repent.

That, anyway, is the way the Catholic Church looks at the matter. For fundamentalists it makes no difference how one lives or ends his life. One could be another Mother Teresa, yet still be damned by not accepting Christ in the fundamentalists' senses—and there have been more than a few fundamentalist writers who have remarked that Mother Teresa is doomed, her (to them false) faith and earthly good works notwithstanding. On the other hand, one can sober up Sunday morning, go to church, heed the altar call, announce to the congregants an acceptance of Jesus as personal Lord and Savior, and, so long as that is really believed, all is well. Nothing can be done, no sin can be committed, no matter how heinous, that will forfeit salvation.

The reason is that "accepting Jesus" has nothing to do with turning a spiritually dead soul into a soul alive with sanctifying grace. The soul remains the same. Whether one has led a good life or a clearly wicked one, the soul is depraved, worthless, unable to stand on its own before God; it is a bottomless pit of sin, and a few more sins thrown in will not change its nature, just as taking a cleaning compound to it will not make it shine in the least. For the fundamentalist, sanctifying grace is a figment of Catholics' imaginations. Accepting Christ accomplishes one thing and one thing only. It makes God cover one's sinfulness. It makes him turn a blind eye to it. It is as though he hides the soul under a cloak. Any soul under this cloak is admitted to heaven, no matter how putrescent the reality beneath; no one without the

cloak, no matter how pristine, can enter the pearly gates.

The Reformers saw justification as a mere legal act by which God declares the sinner to be meriting heaven even though he remains in fact unjust and sinful. It is not a real eradication of sin, but a covering or nonimputation. It is not an inner renewal and a real sanctification, only an external application of Christ's justice. The Catholic Church, not surprisingly, understands justification differently. It sees it as a true eradication of sin and a true sanctification and renewal. The soul becomes objectively pleasing to God and so merits heaven. It merits heaven because now it is actually good. Scripture conceives of the forgiveness of sins as a real and complete removal of them. The words used are "blot out" (Ps 50:3), "clears away" (Ps 102:12), "blotting out" (Is 43:25), "takes away" (Jn 1:29). The few times the Bible mentions "covering" sins refer not to the forgiveness of sins by God, but to the forgiveness of one man's sins by another. Since we cannot actually forgive one another's sins (that is up to God), the best we can do is overlook them or "cover" them. Fundamentalism's notion that God "covers" our sins, but does not actually remove them, is an unfortunate misreading of the Bible that found its origin in Luther.

On the positive side, the Bible shows that justification is a rebirth. It is a generation of a supernatural life in a former sinner (Jn 3:5; Titus 3:5), a thorough inner renewal (Eph 4:23), and a real sanctification (1 Cor 6:11). The soul itself becomes beautiful and holy. It is not just an ugly soul hidden under a beautiful cloak. Because it is beautiful and holy, it can be admitted to heaven, where nothing unclean is allowed.

The assurance of salvation is perhaps the most enticing tenet of fundamentalism, particularly for people steeped, justly, in the guilt of their former lives.² There is no need for true reformation of character, although to some extent that follows because of the joy of being saved and the very real desire to live the kind of life one's fellow fundamentalists lead. Being "born again" can be so easy, and in that sense it is a relief. There is, at least, no need for an embarrassing confession of faults, whether to a congregation or to a priest in a dark cubicle or, sometimes worse, to oneself. One can avoid all particularities, admitting transgressions in general, forgetting them in particular. There is no need for a true examination of conscience. Once one accepts Christ as his personal Lord and Savior, the past ceases to exist; more precisely, it exists, but it does not at all matter. It does not have to be made up for or atoned for, and it does not even have to be built on.

Does this sound too good to be true? Take a look at what fundamentalists say. Wilson Ewin, the author of a booklet called *There Is Therefore Now No Condemnation*,³ says that “the person who places his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His Blood shed at Calvary is eternally secure. He can never lose his salvation. No personal breaking of God’s or man’s laws or commandments can nullify that status.” Ewin cites Hebrews 9:12, which states: “nor by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered the most holy place once and for all, having obtained eternal redemption.” “To deny the assurance of salvation would be to deny Christ’s perfect redemption”, argues Ewin, and this is something he can say only because he confuses redemption and salvation. The truth is that we are all redeemed—Christians, Jews, Moslems, animists in the darkest forests—but our salvation is conditional.

Ewin says that “no wrong act or sinful deed can ever affect the believer’s salvation. The sinner did nothing to merit God’s grace and likewise he can do nothing to demerit grace. True, sinful conduct always lessens one’s fellowship with Christ, limits his contribution to God’s work and can result in serious disciplinary action by the Holy Spirit.” (But how serious can this disciplinary action be, since the loss of heaven is not part of it?) “However,” Ewin continues, “none of the numerous examples of sin involving God’s people in the Bible ever teach or suggest a loss of salvation. The reason? Salvation is by grace from the moment of the new birth until physical death occurs.” He cites Romans 5:15: “But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man’s offense many died, much more is the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.”

What this means, explains Ewin, is that

the sinner must be declared righteous in order to be saved. The righteousness is imputed (credited) to the sinner who repents and trusts only in Christ and His shed Blood for salvation. The sinner never becomes righteous. He is simply declared righteous. The righteousness of Christ is credited to the sinner who trusts. This wonderful truth is expressed in these words, “But to him who does not work but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, just as David also described the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin (Rom 4:5-8).

Ewin says that

absolute assurance of salvation through imputed righteousness can never be broken by sin. The reason is simple—this righteousness has nothing to do with the keeping of God’s commandments

or moral law. The Bible says, “But now the righteousness of God apart from the Law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God which is through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all who believe” (Rom, 3:21-22). God’s law or commandments were given to point out the fact of sin. The law shows the unregenerated man how wicked and lost he is before a Holy God. Keeping them or breaking them has no part in the believer’s possession of credited or imputed righteousness.

Ewin is particularly candid. Most fundamentalist writers state the assurance of salvation in a slightly different way. They do not emphasize the logical consequence of their position, that later sin, no matter how great, cannot undo one’s salvation. They agree with Ewin that assurance can be absolute, but instead of arguing that “no personal breaking of God’s or man’s laws or commandments can nullify” that assurance, they emphasize that someone who has been saved will not, in fact, sin as frequently as he did before accepting Christ as his personal Savior. (They do not say he will not sin at all.) Good works, for them as for Ewin, still have nothing to do with obtaining salvation, but they are a sign of election. Keith Green put it this way in his tract *Salvation According to Rome*:

Good works, of course, are pleasing to God and they have an important and necessary place in the life of the Christian. They naturally follow if one has true faith, and they are performed out of love and gratitude to God for the great salvation that He has bestowed. Good works, in other words, are not the cause and basis of salvation, but rather the fruits and proof of salvation. . . . [The Christian] performs them not to *get* saved, but because he *is* saved.

Some fundamentalists, perhaps uncomfortable with the cold logic of Ewin’s position and even with the softer version given by Green, go so far as to say that one can indeed lose salvation through later sin. They see the assurance of salvation as conditional and not absolute; it is dependent on the sinner keeping his part of a bargain. If the sinner continues to sin as before, he loses salvation, which is assured only so long as his repentance manifests itself outwardly in a reformed life. This is perilously close to the Catholic position and is grounded on Hebrews 10:26: “If we go on sinning wilfully, when once the full knowledge of truth has been granted to us, we have no further sacrifice for sin to look forward to; nothing but a terrible expectation of judgment, a fire that will eagerly consume the rebellious.” But this appears to be a minority position among fundamentalists, since most see it as no assurance at all and as making salvation a consequence of man’s works. The majority view is that salvation, if once achieved, simply cannot be lost, most fundamentalists being satisfied to say that the saved man either will not sin or

will not sin grievously. They may not carry their principles to their end and assert, with Ewin, that no sin can undo salvation; they just affirm that the saved man will not, in fact, commit any great sin. They avoid the charge of antinomianism by never admitting the saved man is, in a way, free to sin as he wishes, because they insist he will not wish to sin as he once did. (They seem disinclined to make an empirical investigation of the matter. They take no surveys to learn if there can be found a saved man who sins just as avidly as before, perhaps on the theory that any such continuation in sin would prove that he was never saved in the first place.)

From all this fundamentalists conclude that the New Testament, when speaking of living people as saints, means not that they will *become* saints in heaven *if* they follow God's commandments (this is the way Catholics understand Paul to have written), but that they are already, right now, saints, just like the saints in heaven. They have no more chance of not being allowed into heaven than have heaven's present residents of being thrown out. "You are no longer exiles, then, or aliens; the saints are your fellow citizens, you belong to God's household" (Eph 2:19).

Catholics look at such verses as merely Paul's expectations for his disciples; fundamentalists look at them as his acknowledgment of their existing status. Ronald Knox noted that there is no need "to suppose that all these high-sounding phrases which St. Paul uses about the Church refer to a collection of Saints already made perfect. To be sure, he calls all Christian folk 'saints'; it is his way; he sees us not as we are but as we ought to be. These 'saints' had to be warned against fornication, against thieving, against bitter schisms; it is the Church we know."⁴

The anonymous author of *Can Anyone Really Know for Sure?*⁵ says the "Lord Jesus wanted His followers to be so sure of their salvation that they would rejoice more in the expectation of heaven than in victories on earth. 'These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God (1 John 5:13).' " The author admits, though, that there can be a false assurance: "The New Testament teaches us that genuine assurance is possible and desirable, but it also warns us that we can be deceived through a false assurance. Jesus declared: 'Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord" shall enter the kingdom of heaven' (Mt 7:21)." But one can find true assurance. "First, you must accept the fact of the finished work of Christ. Acknowledging your sin

(Rom 3:23, 6:23) and inability to save yourself (Eph 2:8, 9), place your trust in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior (Acts 16:13). Having done that, you can know your salvation is real. That's true assurance!"

Is it really? Consider the case of a fundamentalist minister convicted of a heinous crime. What must the man in the pew conclude from his sin? That the pastor was just as saved as his congregants, who would have been embarrassed to attend a movie rated less than PG? Logically they would have to say precisely that, if the man had been saved according to the fundamentalist scheme of things, even if his experience of salvation had come years before, even if his last years had been ones of perversity. From the fundamentalists' perspective, one can do nothing to lose salvation.

Putting aside the question whether this is a positive invitation to antinomianism—after all, if one is guaranteed heaven, why not have fun here below while the having's good?—the congregants naturally wonder whether their pastor was ever saved at all. No matter what the theory might be, it rankles to think a saved person would do such a thing or that a saved person would sin at all. One might call it the fundamentalist equivalent of Catholics wondering whether the man in the chasuble was ever validly ordained. A man never validly ordained as a priest cannot confect the sacraments, even if he goes through the motions perfectly. A fundamentalist pastor who himself was never saved—well, that is a disturbing thought.

It is a thought that leads to one of two conclusions. Either this pastor was never saved in the first place, although everyone thought he was—this implies one can never tell from outward actions who is saved and who is not—or he was indeed saved but can now sin with impunity. But that is repugnant to common moral convictions. A pastor known for years by his congregants would be presumed saved; if they could be fooled, couldn't the man have fooled himself? If he, with some formal religious training, thought he was born again when he was not, how is the average fundamentalist to know whether his conversion "took"?

How can any fundamentalist know his salvation experience was real, that it "worked"? He cannot. Leading a good life immediately after being born again proves nothing, since one might sin grievously at a later time. Leading a bad life right after apparently being saved does not disprove it, since one's sins are immaterial.

Either way, the doctrine seems nearly useless because, when reflected on seriously, it seems to make impossible the very assurance it is supposed to

give.

Besides, there are verses that call the whole notion of the assurance of salvation into question. “I buffet my own body, and make it my slave; or I, who have preached to others, may myself be rejected as worthless”, says Paul (1 Cor 9:27). This follows the well-known verses that speak of running a race, and the race, of course, is the race of life, the finish line being entrance into heaven. The author of the Radio Bible Class booklet says that Paul “did not want to lose the reward for service through failing to satisfy his Lord; he was not afraid of losing his salvation”. While that interpretation seems to strain the passage a bit, it is not entirely unreasonable, but 1 Corinthians 9:27 should not be read in isolation.

Compare it to Philippians 2:12; “Beloved, you have always shown yourselves obedient; and now that I am at a distance, not less but much more than when I am present, you must work to earn your salvation, in anxious fear.” Other translations say “work out your own salvation in fear and trembling”. This is not the language of self-confident assurance. What is more, Paul tells us, “All of us have a scrutiny to undergo before Christ’s judgement-seat, for each to reap what his mortal life has earned, good or ill, according to his deeds” (2 Cor 5:10), and God “will award to every man what his acts have deserved” (Rom 2:6). But if the only act of consequence is the born-again experience, what difference do the other acts make? The apostle notes that “there is graciousness, then, in God, and there is also severity. His severity is for those who have fallen away, his graciousness is for thee, only so long as thou dost continue in his grace; if not, thou too shalt be pruned away” (Rom 11:22). Paul wrote this to people who were already “saved”, in a state of grace—a grace they could lose, becoming “unsaved”.

These verses demonstrate that we indeed will be judged by what we do and not just by the one act of whether we accept Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior. Yet it is not to be thought that being do-gooders is sufficient. The Bible is quite clear that we are saved by faith. The Reformers were quite right in saying this, and to this extent they merely repeated the constant teaching of Church. Where they erred was in saying that we are saved by faith alone. If it is true that we are judged by our acts (presuming first we have faith), then it is not enough to say that faith alone, in the traditional Protestant sense of fiduciary faith—trust in Christ’s promises—can be enough. If it were, we would not have to worry about our other acts.

Recall that Nicodemus was told by Christ that he must be reborn by water

and the Holy Spirit (Jn 3:5). In the fundamentalist scheme of things, despite their protestations, the water reduces to nothing at all. For Catholics the whole phrase “water and the Holy Spirit” is one; it means baptism. For fundamentalists only the second part of the phrase is operative. The Holy Spirit does his job by convicting us of sin and showing us we need to put our faith in Christ. The water is forgotten. If one dies after being born again, but before being baptized, one gets to heaven anyway. Although fundamentalists look at baptism as an ordinance, it is not necessary for salvation. There is no real connection between baptism and salvation because baptism as such does nothing. It is the intellectual acceptance of Christ that does it all.

Just as baptism, then, is not actually needed for salvation, the acceptance of Christ as personal Lord and Savior being enough, so no other act, no matter how good, can assist salvation. This flies in the face of the passages from Paul. Another way to look at it is this. Consider Romans 5:2: “We are confident in the hope of attaining glory as the sons of God.” If we, having been born again in fundamentalism’s sense, are now sure of heaven, and if we know nothing can deprive us of it, then we have no reason to hope because we *know* that heaven is ours. But “our salvation is founded upon the hope of something”, says Paul. “Hope would not be hope at all if its object were in view; how could man still hope for something which he sees?” (Rom 8:24). We hope for heaven, however well disposed we might be spiritually, because we know we still have a chance to lose it.

“Are you saved?” asks the fundamentalist. “I am redeemed,” answers the Catholic, “and like the apostle Paul I am working out my salvation in fear and trembling, with hopeful confidence—but not with a false assurance—and I do all this as the Church has taught, unchanged, from the time of Christ.”

Chapter 14

Baptism of Infants

Fundamentalists say the Catholic Church errs in baptizing infants. Baptism, they say, is for adults only, and it is to be administered only after an adult has undergone a “born-again” experience—that is, after he has “accepted Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Savior”. At the instant of acceptance, when he is “born again”, the adult becomes a Christian, one of the elect, and his salvation is assured. Baptism follows, although it actually does nothing itself to secure salvation; one who dies before being baptized, but after “being saved”, goes to heaven anyway.

Baptism, for fundamentalists, is not a sacrament, but an ordinance. It does not produce the grace it symbolizes; it is merely a symbol, a public manifestation of the adult’s conversion. Since only an adult can be converted, baptism is not appropriate for infants or for young children below the age of reason. Most fundamentalists say infants and young children are automatically saved, no matter what. Only once a person reaches the age of reason and has sinned does he need to “accept Jesus” in order to reach heaven.

The Catholic Church has always understood baptism differently, of course, understanding it as a sacrament that accomplishes several things, the first of which is the remission of sin, both original sin and actual sin: in the case of infants and young children, only original sin, since they are incapable of actual sin; in the case of older persons, both. “Repent, Peter said to them, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, to have your sins forgiven; then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is for you and your children, and for all those, however far away, whom the Lord our God calls to himself “(Acts 2:38-39). We also read: “Rise up, and receive baptism, washing away your sins at the invocation of his name” (Acts 22:16). These commands are universal, not restricted to adults.

Along with this forgiveness of sins comes an infusion of grace. It is this grace that makes the soul spiritually alive and capable of enjoying heaven.

There are other benefits, too, such as the elimination of punishment due for sins and the right to special graces necessary to enable the baptized to fulfill his baptismal promises.

In the Middle Ages, some groups, such as the Waldenses and Catharists, rejected infant baptism. Later, the Anabaptists (“re-baptizers”) echoed them in saying infants are incapable of being baptized validly. But the Catholic Church has always held that Christ’s law applies to infants as well as adults. Jesus said that no one can enter heaven unless he has been born again of water and the Holy Spirit (Jn 3:5). His words can be taken to apply to anyone capable of having a right to his Kingdom. He asserted such a right even for children: “Let the children be, do not keep them back from me; the Kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Mt 19:14).

Fundamentalists say this verse does not apply to young children or infants since it implies the persons being referred to are able to approach Christ on their own. (Older translations have “Suffer the little children to come unto me”, which seems to suggest they can do so under their own power.) Fundamentalists conclude the passage refers only to older, ambulatory children, those capable of sin. But the parallel text says, “Then they brought little children to him” (Lk 18:15), and following this are the same words as in Matthew 19:14. What is more, some translations even use the term “infants”. Indeed, in the Greek the words refer to infants in arms, little children who are unable to approach Christ on their own. Besides, Paul notes that baptism has replaced circumcision (Col 2:11-12). Of course, it was mainly infants who were circumcised under the Old Law; circumcision of adults was rare, there being few converts to Judaism. If Paul, in making this parallel, meant to exclude infants from baptism, it is strange that he did not say so.

It is not often admitted by fundamentalists that nowhere does the Bible actually say baptism is to be restricted to adults. They just conclude that is what it should be taken as meaning, even if the text does not explicitly support such a view. Naturally enough, the people whose baptisms we read about in Scripture are adults because they were converted as adults. This makes sense, because Christianity was just starting out and there were no “cradle Christians”, no people brought up from childhood in Christian homes.

One might ask, Does the Bible ever say that infants or young children *can* be baptized? The indications are fairly clear. Lydia was converted by Paul’s preaching. “She was baptized, with all her household” (Acts 16:15). The jailer of Paul and Silas, who was about to commit suicide when they were

miraculously freed from their imprisonment, was converted by them. We are told that “without delay he and all his were baptized” (Acts 16:33). And in his greetings to the Corinthians, Paul recalled that, “Yes, and I did baptize the household of Stephanas” (1 Cor 1:16).

In all these cases, whole households or families were baptized. Presumably this means more than just the spouse: at least the children, probably also servants, if the household had any. But would an impoverished jailer, about to kill himself for what he took to be malfeasance, have servants at all, being, as he was, near the bottom of the social ladder? Not likely. “He and all his” must refer to himself plus at least two others; if it referred to just himself and his wife, we would expect to read “without delay he and his wife were baptized”, but we read “without delay he and all his were baptized”.

The natural implication is that the jailer had at least one child who was baptized, too. A similar argument can be made in the other cases. Granted, we cannot tell the age of the children; they may have been past the age of reason, not infants. Then again, they could have been babes in arms. More probably, there were both younger and older children. Even though the scriptural evidence is not absolutely conclusive on the issue, it leans in favor of infant baptism. At any rate, there is nothing in the New Testament that says infants and young children are unsuited to baptism.

The present Catholic attitude accords perfectly with early Christian practices. Origen, for instance, wrote in the third century that “the Church received from the apostles the tradition of giving baptism also to infants.”¹ John Chrysostom said, “For this reason we baptize even infants, though they do not have sins [of their own]: so that there may be given to them holiness, righteousness, adoption, inheritance, brotherhood with Christ, and that they may be his members.”² The Council of Carthage, in 252, condemned the opinion that infants should be withheld from baptism until the eighth day after birth.³

Now these citations—they could be multiplied—do not themselves prove, beyond doubt, that baptism of infants was authorized by Christ, but they do refer to a practice that was already old at an early date. After all, the Council of Carthage was not adjudicating a dispute about infant baptism as such, but was deciding at what point infants should be baptized. No one, apparently, was claiming the practice was contrary to Scripture or Tradition. It was as though they were saying, “We all agree infants can be baptized and that infant baptism was practiced from the first, but exactly *when* should they be

baptized?” Another telling point: If infant baptism was opposed to the religious practices of the first believers, why do we have no record of early Christian writers condemning it?

Fundamentalists do not pay much attention to the historical situation. They deflect appeals to history by saying baptism requires faith and children are incapable of having faith. Thus, no baptism for them. It is true that Christ prescribed instruction and actual faith for adult converts (Mt 28:19-20), but his general law on the absolute necessity of baptism for salvation (Jn 3:5) puts no restriction on the subject of baptism. Although infants are included in the law, they cannot be expected to meet requirements that cannot be met because of their age. They cannot be expected to be instructed and have faith when they are incapable of receiving instruction or manifesting faith.

The fundamentalist position on infant baptism is a consequence not of the Bible's strictures, but of the logic of fundamentalism's notion of salvation. Although the Bible is not as clear on the issue as we might wish, certainly what it says leans toward the Catholic position, which is seconded by early Christian practice and writings. Fundamentalists ignore all that because they must preserve their concept of how salvation is obtained. They see salvation as coming not through an infusion of grace, which is the Catholic position, but through an acceptance of Jesus as one's personal Lord and Savior. Since only an adult can be saved in this way, they conclude baptism is wasted on infants and young children—thus their opposition to the Catholic position.

Chapter 15

The Forgiveness of Sins

All pardon for sins comes, ultimately, from Calvary, but how is this pardon to be received by individuals? How are people who sin today to obtain forgiveness? Did Christ leave us any means within the Church to take away sin? The Bible says he gave us two means. Baptism was given to take away the sin inherited from Adam (original sin) and any sins (called actual sins, because they come from our own acts) committed before baptism. For sins committed after baptism, a different sacrament is needed. It has been called penance, confession, and reconciliation, each word emphasizing one of its aspects.

During his life, Christ forgave sins, as in the case of the woman taken in adultery (Jn 8:1-11) and the woman who anointed his feet (Lk 7:48). He exercised this power as *man*, “to convince you that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins while he is on earth” (Mk 2:10). Since he would not always be with the Church, visibly, Christ gave this power to other men so the Church, which is the continuation of his presence throughout time, would be able to offer forgiveness to future generations. He gave his power to the apostles, and it was necessarily a communicable power, one that could be passed on to their successors and agents, since, obviously, the apostles would not always be on earth either. “He breathed on them, and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit; when you forgive men’s sins, they are forgiven, when you hold them bound, they are held bound” (Jn 20:22-23).¹

Christ told the apostles to follow his example: “As the Father sent me, so am I sending you” (Jn 20:21). “What he did, they were to do. Just as the apostles were to carry Christ’s message to the whole world, so were they to carry his forgiveness: “I promise you, all that you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and all that you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Mt 18:18). This power was not to be used as being from themselves, but as being from God: “This, as always, is God’s doing; it is he who, through Christ, has reconciled us to himself, and allowed us to minister this

reconciliation of his to others” (2 Cor 5:18). Indeed, confirms Paul, “We are Christ’s ambassadors” (2 Cor 5:20).

It is said by some that any power given to the apostles died with them. Not so. Some powers, certainly, must have, such as universal jurisdiction. But the powers absolutely necessary to maintain the Church as a living, spiritual society had to be passed down, generation to generation. If they ceased, the Church would cease, except as a quaint abstraction. Christ ordered the apostles to “make disciples of all nations”. It would take time, much time. He promised his assistance”. “And behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world” (Mt 28:19-20).

If the apostles and disciples believed that Christ instituted a priesthood that included the power to forgive sins in his stead, we would expect the successors of the apostles—that is, the bishops—and Christians of later years to act as though such power was legitimately and habitually exercised. On the other hand, if the priestly forgiveness of sins was what fundamentalists term it, an “invention”, and if it was something foisted on the young Church by ecclesiastical or political leaders, we would expect to find records of protest. In fact, in early Christian writings we find no sign of protests concerning priestly forgiveness of sins. Quite the contrary. We find confession to a priest was accepted as consistent with the original deposit of faith.

If the Church itself instituted confession (or “auricular confession”, as some like to emphasize: private confession “to the ear” of a priest), and if the sacrament did not stem directly from Christ, it should be possible to point to a date for its “invention”. Some opponents of the Catholic position think they can do that. Loraine Boettner claims “auricular confession to a priest instead of to God” was instituted in 1215 at the Fourth Lateran Council.² This is an extreme example, even for a committed anti-Catholic. There are not many people with the gumption to place the “invention” of confession so late, since there is so much early Christian writing—a good portion of it a thousand and more years before that Council—that refers to the practice of confession as something already long established. One cannot very well “invent” something that has been around a millennium and more.

Actually, the Fourth Lateran Council did not introduce confession, although it did discuss it. To combat the lax morals of the time (morals are always more lax than they should be, at any time in history; that is one consequence of original sin), the Council more specifically defined the already-existing duty to confess one’s sins by saying Catholics should

confess at least once a year. To issue an official decree about a sacrament is hardly the same as “inventing” that sacrament.

The earliest Christian writings, such as the first-century *Didache*, are indefinite on the procedure to be used for the forgiveness of sins, but a self-accusation is listed as a part of the Church’s requirement by the time of Irenaeus.³ The sacrament of penance is clearly in use, but it is not yet clear from Irenaeus just how, or to whom, confession is to be made. Is it privately, to the priest, or before the whole congregation with the priest presiding? The one thing we can say for sure is that the sacrament is understood by Irenaeus to go back to the beginning of the Church.

Slightly later Christian writers, such as Origen,⁴ Cyprian,⁵ and Aphraates,⁶ are quite clear in saying confession is to be made to a priest. (In fact, in their writings the whole process of penance is termed *exhomologesis*, which simply means confession: the confession was seen as the main part of the sacrament.) Cyprian writes that the forgiving of sins can take place only “through the priests”.⁷ Ambrose makes things clear, saying, “this right is given to priests only”.⁸ Pope Leo I says absolution can be obtained only through the prayers of the priests.⁹ These utterances are not taken as anything novel, but as reminders of accepted belief. We have no record of anyone objecting, of anyone claiming these men were pushing an “invention”.

Note that the power given to the apostles by Christ was twofold: to forgive sins or to hold them bound, which means to retain them unforgiven. Several things follow from this. First, the apostles could not know what sins to forgive, what not to forgive, unless they were first told the sins by the sinner. This implies confession. Second, their authority was not merely to proclaim that God had already forgiven sins or that he would forgive sins if there were proper repentance.

Such interpretations do not account for the distinction between forgiving and retaining—nor do they account for the importance given to the utterance in John 20:22-23. If God has already forgiven all a man’s sins or will forgive them all, past and future, on a single act of repentance, then it makes little sense to tell the apostles they have been given the power to “retain” sins, since forgiveness would be an all-or-nothing thing and nothing could be “retained”. If forgiveness can be partial, how is one to tell which sins have been forgiven, which not, in the absence of a priestly decision? One cannot very well rely on gut feelings. No, the biblical passages make sense, hang together, only if the apostles and their successors were given a real authority.

Still, some people are not convinced. One is Paul Juris, a former priest, now a fundamentalist, who has written a pamphlet on this subject.¹⁰ The pamphlet is widely distributed by organizations opposed to Catholicism. The cover describes the work as “a study of John 20:23, a much misunderstood and misused portion of Scripture pertaining to the forgiveness of sins”. Juris begins by mentioning “two main schools of thought”, the first being the Catholic position, the second the fundamentalist. He puts the fundamentalist position this way: “In this setting and with these words, Jesus was commissioning his disciples, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to go and preach the Gospel to every creature. Those who believed the Gospel, their sins would be forgiven. Those who refused to believe the Gospel, their sins would be retained.”

He correctly notes that “among Christians, it is generally agreed that regular confession of one’s sins is obviously necessary to remain in good relationship with God. So the issue is not whether we should or should not confess our sins. Rather, the real issue is: How does God say that our sins are forgiven or retained?” Juris says, “Since John 20:23 can be interpreted in more than one way, it will be necessary to examine this portion of Scripture not only in its context, but also in the light of other Scriptures pertaining directly to this subject. And, since we know that God’s Word never contradicts itself, what better way could we arrive at the true meaning of this verse of Scripture, than by comparing it with other Scriptures?”

This sounds fine, on the surface, but this apparently reasonable approach masks what really happens next. Juris engages in verse slinging, listing as many verses as he can find that refer to God forgiving sins, in hope the sheer mass of verses will settle the question. Yet none of the verses he lists specifically interprets John 20:23, and none contradicts the Catholic interpretation. For instance, he cites verses such as these: “Be it known therefore to you, brethren, that through him [Christ] forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and in him everyone who believes is acquitted of all the things of which you could not be acquitted by the Law of Moses” (Acts 13:38-39); “And he said to them, Go into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he who does not believe shall be condemned” (Mk 16:15-16).

Juris says verses such as these demonstrate that “all that was left for the disciples to do was to ‘go’ and ‘proclaim’ this wonderful good news (the Gospel) to all men. As they proclaimed this good news of the Gospel, those

who believed the Gospel, their sins would be forgiven. Those who rejected (did not believe) the Gospel, their sins would be retained.” This is not a proof; these verses, and the others he lists, do not interpret John 20:23. Juris does nothing more than show the Bible says God will forgive sins, something no one doubts. He does not remotely prove that John 20:23 is equivalent to a command to “go” and to “preach”. He sidesteps the evident problems in the fundamentalist interpretation of the verse.

It takes no scholar to see the passage does not say anything about preaching the good news. Jesus tells the apostles that “when you forgive men’s sins, they are forgiven”. Nothing here about preaching—that is handled elsewhere, such as in Matthew 28:19 and related verses. Instead, Jesus is telling the apostles that they have been empowered to do something. He does not say, “When God forgives men’s sins, they are forgiven.” It is hardly necessary to say that. He uses the second person plural: “you”. He talks about the apostles forgiving, not preaching. When he refers to retaining sins, he uses the same form: “When you hold them bound, they are held bound.” There it is again, “you”.

What Juris does—his pamphlet is a good example of this—is to select verses, all that he can find, that mention the same general topic, the forgiveness of sins. Since the other verses he gives, about two dozen of them, speak about forgiveness by God, he concludes, improperly, that God could not have appointed men as his agents. The best Juris can do, ultimately, is to assert that John 20:23 means the apostles were given authority only to proclaim the forgiveness of sins—but asserting is not proving.

Granted, his is a technique that works. Many readers get the impression the fundamentalist interpretation has been shown to be true. After all, if one proposes to interpret one verse and accomplishes that by listing irrelevant verses that refer to something other than the specific point in controversy, lazy readers will conclude an impressive array of evidence has been marshaled. All they have to do is count the citations. Here is one for the Catholics, they say, looking at John 20:22-23, but ten or twenty or thirty for the fundamentalists. The fundamentalists must be right! They do not detect that the ten or twenty or thirty verses are a smokescreen.

Juris’ technique illustrates that fundamentalists do not really “find” their doctrines through a literal reading of the Bible. They approach the Bible with already-held views, their own tradition, one might say, and they use the Bible to substantiate these views. Some can be substantiated easily, such as the

reality of the Resurrection. Others cannot be substantiated by Scripture at all, because they are contrary to Scripture. In these cases, Scripture is either ignored or interpreted in an awkwardly metaphorical sense, as with John 6, where the Eucharist is promised, or as with John 20:22-23, where the sacrament of penance is established.

Another point. Fundamentalist writers often ignore John 20:22-23 since it is troublesome. They shift focus, insisting there is “only one mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ” (1 Tim 2:5). True, but they draw an improper inference. Christ was at liberty to decide how his mediation would be applied to us. It is a question of fact. Naturally enough, the one who is offended does the forgiving. When we sin, we offend God, so it is he to whom we look for forgiveness. But he can arrange his forgiveness either personally and immediately or through an agent. Which did he declare to be the usual (though not exclusive) way to forgive sins: by direct application to him or by means of confessing to a priest? If the first, then John 20:22-23 becomes unintelligible. The words would not remotely mean what they so clearly seem to say.

Is the Catholic who confesses his sins to a priest any better off than the non-Catholic who confesses straight to God? Yes. First, he seeks forgiveness the way Christ intended it to be sought.

Second, by confessing to a priest the Catholic learns a lesson in humility, which is conveniently avoided when one confesses only through private prayer—and how we all desire to escape humbling experiences! Third, the Catholic receives sacramental graces the non-Catholic does not get; through the sacrament of penance not only are sins forgiven, but graces are obtained. Fourth, and in some ways the most important, the Catholic is assured that his sins are forgiven; he does not have to rely on a subjective “feeling”. Lastly, the Catholic can also obtain sound advice on avoiding sin in the future, while the non-Catholic praying in private remains uninstructed.

True, Christ could have decided that sins would normally be forgiven merely through private prayer, but he knew the world would grow old before his return. With himself gone, he wanted his followers to have every possible consolation, every possible assurance, every possible help, so he instituted the sacrament through which we are reconciled to God. During his lifetime Christ sent out his followers to do his work. Just before he left this world, he gave the apostles special authority, commissioning them to make God’s forgiveness present to all lands, to all people, and the whole Christian world

accepted this until just a few centuries ago. If there is an “invention” here, it is not the sacrament of penance, but the notion that the priestly forgiveness of sins is not to be found in the Bible or in early Christian history.

Chapter 16

Purgatory

In 1769 James Boswell had this exchange with Samuel Johnson:

Boswell: “What do you think, Sir, of purgatory, as believed by the Roman Catholics?”

Johnson: “Why, Sir, it is a very harmless doctrine. They are of the opinion that the generality of mankind are neither so obstinately wicked as to deserve everlasting punishment, nor so good as to merit being admitted into the society of blessed spirits; and therefore that God is graciously pleased to allow a middle state, where they may be purified by certain degrees of suffering. You see, Sir, there is nothing unreasonable in this.”

Boswell: “But then, Sir, their Masses for the dead?”

Johnson: “Why, Sir, if it be at once established that there are souls in purgatory, it is as proper to pray for them, as for our brethren of mankind who are yet in this life.”¹

Although Johnson was no “Catholic”, he recognized that the doctrine of purgatory is not at odds with other tenets of Christianity. In fact, as he may have known, there is considerable scriptural warrant for it, even if the doctrine is not explicitly set out in the Bible.

The doctrine can be stated briefly. Purgatory is a state of purification, where the soul that has fully repented of its sins but has not fully expiated them has removed from itself the last elements of uncleanness. In purgatory all remaining love of self is transformed into love of God. At death one’s soul goes to heaven, if it is completely fit for heaven; to purgatory, if it is not quite fit for heaven, but not worthy of condemnation; or to hell, if it is completely unfit for heaven. Purgatory is a temporary state. Everyone who enters it will get to heaven, and, after the last soul leaves purgatory for heaven, purgatory will cease to exist. There will remain only heaven and hell.

When we die, we undergo what is called the particular, or individual, judgment. We are judged instantly and receive our reward, for good or ill. We know at once what our final destiny will be. At the end of time, though, when the last people have died, there will come the general judgment to

which the Bible refers. In it all our sins will be revealed. Augustine said, in *The City of God*, that “temporary punishments are suffered by some in this life only, by others after death, by others both now and then; but all of them before that last and strictest judgment”.² It is between the particular and general judgments, then, that the soul expiates its sins: “I tell you, you will not get out till you have paid the very last penny” (Lk 12:59). If full expiation occurs before the general judgment, the soul is released from purgatory and goes to heaven.

Fundamentalists note that biblical references to the judgment refer only to heaven and hell. Quite true. That is because most of the references are to the general judgment, when all will be judged at once (which means, for those who died earlier and already underwent an individual judgment, a kind of rejudging, but one that is public). It is at the general judgment that the justice and mercy of God will be demonstrated to all. Opponents of the Catholic position are generally silent about what happens to the souls of people who die long before the Last Day. There is no hint from Scripture that these souls remain in suspended animation. No, “men die only once, and after that comes judgment” (Heb 9:27). Judgment is immediate—which, by the way, is one reason why reincarnation is impossible. It is here, between individual judgment and general judgment, that a soul may find itself in purgatory.

Fundamentalists are fond of saying the Catholic Church “invented” the doctrine of purgatory, but they have trouble saying just when. Most professional anti-Catholics—the ones who make their living attacking “Romanism”—seem to place the blame on Pope Gregory the Great, who reigned from 590-604. That hardly accounts for the request of Monica, mother of Augustine, who asked her son, in the fourth century, to remember her soul in his Masses. This would have made no sense if she thought her soul could not be helped by prayers, if she thought there was no possibility of being somewhere other than heaven or hell.

Still less does the ascription of the doctrine to Gregory account for the graffiti in the catacombs, where the earliest Christians, during the persecutions of the first three centuries, recorded prayers for the dead. Indeed, some of the earliest noninspired Christian writings, such as the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* (second century), refer to the Christian custom of praying for the dead. Such prayers would have been made only if Christians believed in purgatory, even if they did not use that name for it.

No, the historical argument breaks down. Whenever a date is set for the

“invention” of purgatory, one can point to something to show the doctrine was already old many years before that date. Besides, if at some point the doctrine was pulled out of a clerical hat, why does ecclesiastical history record no protest? A study of the history of doctrines shows Christians in the first centuries were up in arms, sometimes quite literally, if anyone suggested the least change in beliefs. They were extremely conservative people, their test of the truth of a doctrine being the question: Was this believed by our ancestors? Surely belief in purgatory would be considered a great change, if it had not been believed from the first—so where are the records of protests? They do not exist, and they never existed. There is no hint, in the oldest writings available to us (or in later ones, for that matter), that “true believers” in the immediate postapostolic years complained about purgatory as a novel doctrine. They must have understood that the oral teaching of the apostles, what Catholics call Tradition, and the Bible not only did not contradict the doctrine but endorsed it.

It is no wonder, then, that professional anti-Catholics spend little time on the history of the belief. (Who can blame them for avoiding an unpleasant subject?) They prefer to claim, instead, that the Bible speaks only of heaven and hell. Wrong again. It speaks quite plainly of a third place, where Christ went after his death, the place commonly called the Limbo of the Fathers, where the just who died before the Redemption were waiting for heaven to be opened to them (1 Pet 3:19). This place was neither heaven nor hell.

Even if the Limbo of the Fathers was not purgatory, its existence shows that a temporary, intermediate state is not contrary to Scripture. Look at it this way. If the Limbo of the Fathers *was* purgatory, then this one verse directly teaches the existence of purgatory. If the Limbo of the Fathers was a different temporary state, then the Bible at least says such a state can exist. It at least proves there can be more than just heaven and hell.

Fundamentalists also say, “We cannot find the word purgatory in Scripture.” True, but that is hardly the point. The words Trinity and Incarnation are not in Scripture either, yet those doctrines are taught in it. Likewise, Scripture teaches that purgatory exists, even if it does not use that word and even if 1 Peter 3:19 refers to a place other than purgatory.

Christ refers to the sinner for whom “there is no forgiveness, either in this world or in the world to come” (Mt 12:32). This implies expiation can occur after death. Paul tells us that at the day of judgment each man’s work will be tried. This trial happens after death. What happens if a man’s work fails the

test? “He will be the loser; and yet he himself will be saved, though only as men are saved by passing through fire” (1 Cor 3:15). Now this loss, this penalty, cannot refer to consignment to hell, since no one is saved there; and heaven cannot be meant, since there is no suffering (“fire”) there. Purgatory alone explains this passage. Then there is the Bible’s approbation of prayers for the dead: “It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they might be loosed from their sins” (2 Mace 12:46). Prayers are not needed by those in heaven, and they cannot help those in hell. That means some people must be in a third place, at least temporarily.³

Why would anyone go to purgatory? To be cleansed. “Nothing unclean shall enter heaven” (Rev 21:27). Anyone who has not completely expiated his sins—that is, not just had them forgiven, but “made up” for them, been punished for them—in this life is, to some extent, “unclean”. Through repentance he may have gained the grace needed to qualify for heaven (which is to say his soul is spiritually alive), but that is not enough. He needs to be cleansed completely. By not admitting the doctrine of purgatory, one necessarily implies that even the slightest defilement results in the loss of the soul, yet even here below not every crime is a capital offense: “Not all sin is deadly” (1 Jn 5:17).

Fundamentalists claim, as an article in Jimmy Swaggart’s magazine *The Evangelist* put it, that “Scripture clearly reveals that all the demands of divine justice on the sinner have been completely fulfilled in Jesus Christ. It also reveals that Christ has totally redeemed, or purchased back, that which was lost. The advocates of a purgatory (and the necessity of prayer for the dead) say, in effect, that the redemption of Christ was incomplete. . . . It has all been done for us by Jesus Christ, there is nothing to be added or done by man.”⁴ This presumes there is a contradiction between the Redemption and our suffering in expiation for our sins. There is not, whether that suffering is in this life or in the next. Paul said he rejoiced “in my sufferings for you, and [I] fill up those things that are wanting in the suffering of Christ” (Col 1:24). Ronald Knox explained this passage by noting that “the obvious meaning is that Christ’s sufferings, although fully satisfactory on behalf of our sins, leave us under a debt of honour, as it were, to repay them by sufferings of our own.”⁵ Paul did not imply there was something lacking in the Redemption, that Christ could not pull it off on his own, and no fundamentalist misreads Colossians 1:24 that way. Analogously, it is not contrary to the Redemption to say we must suffer for our sins; it is a matter of justice. We can suffer here,

or hereafter, or in both places, as Augustine wrote.

Some say, “God does not demand expiation after having forgiven sins.” Tell that to King David. When David repented, God sent Nathan with a message for him: “The Lord on his part has forgiven your sin: you shall not die. But since you have utterly spurned the Lord by this deed, the child born to you must surely die” (2 Sam 12:14). Even after David’s sin was forgiven, he had to undergo expiation. Can we expect less? Fundamentalists think the answer is yes, because Christ obviated the need for any expiation on our part, but the Bible nowhere teaches that. Having one’s sins forgiven is not the same thing as having the punishment for them wiped out.

The main reason for opposition to purgatory is that it cannot coexist with fundamentalism’s notion of salvation. For fundamentalists, salvation comes by “accepting Christ as one’s personal Savior”. Aside from that one act of acceptance, no acts—meaning no good deeds and no sins—make any difference with respect to one’s salvation. If one is “born again” in fundamentalism’s sense, salvation has already occurred, and nothing can keep one from heaven. If not “born again”, one is damned. In fundamentalism’s scheme of things, purgatory would be superfluous, since cleansing before entering heaven would be unnecessary, on the notion that every soul is unclean and God ignores the uncleanness by “covering” the soul’s sinfulness.

Purgatory makes sense only if there is a requirement that a soul not just be *declared* to be clean, but actually *be* clean. After all, if a guilty soul is merely “covered”, if its sinful state still exists but is officially ignored, then, for all the protestations that may be given, it is still a guilty soul. It is still unclean. A man who has not bathed in a month is not cleansed merely by putting on clean clothes; clean clothes will not remove the dirt. Likewise, “covering” a soul will not purify it; its dirty state is merely hidden from view. Catholic theology takes literally the notion that “nothing unclean shall enter heaven”. From this it is inferred that a dirty soul, even if “covered”, remains a dirty soul and is not fit for heaven. It needs to be cleansed or purged of its dirtiness. The purging comes in purgatory.

There is another argument commonly used against purgatory. It is that the Catholic Church makes money from the doctrine. Without purgatory, the claim goes, the Church would go broke. Any number of anti-Catholic books, from the tamest to the most bizarre, claim the Church owes the majority of its wealth to this doctrine. The numbers do not add up.

When a Catholic requests a memorial Mass for the dead—that is, a Mass said for the benefit of someone in purgatory—it is customary to give the parish a stipend, on the principle that the laborer is worth his hire (Lk 10:7) and those who preside at the altar share the altar’s offerings (1 Cor 9:13-14). In the United States, a stipend is commonly around five dollars, but the indigent do not have to pay anything, and no parish maintains a “schedule of fees”. A few people, of course, freely offer more. On average, though, a parish can expect to receive something less than five dollars by way of stipend for each memorial Mass said. These Masses are usually said on weekdays.

Look at what happens on a Sunday. There are often hundreds of people at Mass. In a crowded parish, there may be thousands. Many families and individuals deposit five dollars or more into the collection basket; others deposit less. A few give much more. A parish might have four or five or six Masses on a Sunday. The total from the Sunday collections far outstrips the paltry amount received from the memorial Masses. The facts are that no Catholic parish gets rich from Mass stipends—or even gets much at all. .

In interpreting the Bible, in determining whether the doctrine of purgatory contradicts or confirms what is found in its pages, we come on a recurring question: “Who is to decide?” It hardly suffices to say, “Let the Bible itself decide”, since it is the interpretation of the Bible that is in question, and no book, not even the Bible, can be self-interpreting. Either we interpret it ourselves, using our own resources, or we listen to the word of a divinely appointed interpreter, if one has been established. Catholics hold that Christ empowered the Church to give infallible interpretations of the Bible. “I have still much to say to you, but it is beyond your reach as yet. It will be for him, the truth-giving Spirit, when he comes, to guide you in all truth” (Jn 16:12). This Jesus said to the apostles.

This takes us, of course, to the rule of faith—is it to be found in the Bible alone or in the Bible and Tradition, as handed down by the Church? That question was examined in an earlier chapter, and there is no need to repeat the arguments here. The reader just needs to keep in mind that the controversy about purgatory is really a controversy about much more than purgatory. Purgatory has just been a convenient warring ground. The ultimate disagreement concerns the doctrine of *sob scriptum*. If fundamentalists understood why that doctrine will not wash—why, in fact, it is contrary to Scripture—they would have little difficulty in accepting purgatory and other

Catholic beliefs, such as the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption, which are not explicitly stated in the Bible.

Chapter 17

Peter and the Papacy

Like other Protestants, fundamentalists say Peter was never appointed by Christ as the earthly head of the Church for the simple reason that the Church has no earthly head and was never meant to have one. Christ is the Church's only foundation, in every sense of that term.

The papacy, they say, is an institution that arose out of third-century politics, both secular and ecclesiastical; it has no connection, other than mythological, with the New Testament. It was not established by Christ, even though supposed "successors" to Peter and their apologists claim it was. At best the papacy is a ruse; at worst, a work of the devil. In any case, it is an institution designed to give the Catholic Church an authority it simply does not have.

Besides, the argument continues, Peter was never in Rome and so could not have been the first Pope, and that puts the lie to talk about his "successors"; the unbroken chain is broken in its first link. How can Catholics talk about the divine origin of the papacy when their claim about Peter's whereabouts is wrong? Let us begin with this last charge.

At first glance, it might seem the question, whether Peter went to Rome and died there, is inconsequential. In a way it is. After all, his being in Rome would not itself prove the existence of the papacy; it would be a false inference to say he must have been the first Pope since he was in Rome and later Popes ruled from Rome. With that logic, Paul would have an equal claim to the title of first Pope, since he was an apostle and went to Rome. On the other hand, even if Peter never made it to the capital, he still could have been the first Pope, since one of his successors could have been the first holder of that office to settle there.

Besides, if Peter did end his days at Rome, that might have something to say about who his legitimate successors would be (and it does, since the man elected Bishop of Rome is automatically the new Pope on the notion that Peter was the first Bishop of Rome and the Pope is merely Peter's successor),

but it would say nothing about the status of the papal office. It would not establish that the papacy was instituted by Christ in the first place.

No, somehow the question, while interesting historically, does not seem to be crucial to the real issue, whether the papacy was founded by Christ and, if so, what authority the Pope wields. Still, most anti-Catholic organizations take up the matter and even go to considerable trouble to prove Peter could not have been in Rome. Why? Because they think they can get mileage out of it.

Here is a point on which we can put the lie to Catholic claims, they think. Catholics trace the papacy to Peter, and they say he was martyred in Rome after heading the Church there. If we could show he never went to Rome, that would undermine—psychologically if not logically—their assertion that Peter was the first Pope. If people conclude the Catholic Church is wrong on this historical point, they will conclude it is wrong on the larger one, the supposed existence of the papacy. Such is the reasoning, the real reasoning, of leading anti-Catholics.

The case is stated most succinctly, even if not so bluntly, by Loraine Boettner in *Roman Catholicism*:

The remarkable thing, however, about Peter's alleged bishopric in Rome is that the New Testament has not one word to say about it. The word Rome occurs only nine times in the Bible [actually, ten times in the Old Testament and ten times in the New], and never is Peter mentioned in connection with it. There is no allusion to Rome in either of his epistles. Paul's journey to the city is recorded in great detail (Acts 27 and 28). There is in fact no New Testament evidence, nor any historical proof of any kind, that Peter ever was in Rome. All rests on legend.¹

Well, what about it? Admittedly the scriptural evidence for Peter being in Rome is weak. Nowhere does the Bible unequivocally say he was there; neither does it say he was not. Just as the New Testament never says, "Peter then went to Rome", it never says, "Peter did not go to Rome". In fact, very little is said about where he, or any of the apostles other than Paul, *did* go in the years after the Ascension. For the most part, we have to rely on books other than the New Testament for information about what happened to the Twelve, Peter included, in later years.

But Boettner is wrong when he claims "there is no allusion to Rome in either of [Peter's] epistles". There is, in the greeting at the end of the first epistle: "The Church here in Babylon, united with you by God's election, sends you her greeting, and so does my son, Mark" (1 Pet 5:13). Babylon is a code word for Rome. It is used that way six times in the last book of the

Bible and in extra-biblical works such as *Sibylline Oracles* (5, 159f.), the *Apocalypse of Baruch* (ii, I), and *4 Esdras* (3:1). Eusebius Pamphilus, writing about 303, noted that “it is said that Peter’s first epistle, in which he makes mention of Mark, was composed at Rome itself; and that he himself indicates this, referring to the city figuratively as Babylon.”²

Consider the other New Testament citations: “A second angel followed, who cried out, Babylon, great Babylon is fallen; she who made all the nations drunk with the maddening wine of her fornication” (Rev 14:8); “The great city broke in three pieces, while the cities of the heathens came down in ruins. And God did not forget to minister a draught of his wine, his avenging anger, to Babylon, the great city” (Rev 16:19); “There was a title written over his forehead, The mystic Babylon, great mother-city of all harlots, and all that is abominable on earth” (Rev 17:5); “And he cried aloud, Babylon, great Babylon is fallen” (Rev 18:2); “Standing at a distance, for fear of sharing her punishment, they will cry out, Alas, Babylon the great, alas, Babylon the strong, in one brief hour judgment has come upon you” (Rev 18:10); “So, with one crash of ruin, will Babylon fall, the great city” (Rev 18:21).

These references cannot be to the onetime capital of the Babylonian Empire. That Babylon had been reduced to an inconsequential status by the march of years, military defeat, and political subjugation; it was no longer a “great city”. It played no important part in the recent history of the ancient world. The only truly “great city” in New Testament times was Rome.

“But there is no good reason for saying that ‘Babylon’ means ‘Rome’ ”,³ insists Boettner. But there is, and the good reason is persecution. Peter was known to the authorities as a leader of the Church, and the Church, under Roman law, was organized atheism. (The worship of any gods other than the Roman was considered atheism.) Peter would do himself, not to mention those with him, no service by advertising his presence in the capital—after all, mail service from Rome was then even worse than it is today, and letters could be intercepted easily by Roman officials. Peter was a wanted man, as were all Christian leaders. Why encourage a manhunt? In any event, let us be generous and admit that it is easy for an opponent of Catholicism to think, in good faith, that Peter was never in Rome, at least if he bases his conclusion on the Bible alone. But restricting his inquiry to the Bible is something he should not do; external evidence has to be considered, too.

William A. Jurgens, in his three-volume set *The Faith of the Early Fathers*,⁴ an easily accessible and masterly compendium that cites at length a

great number of works from the *Didache* to John Damascene, includes thirty references to this question, divided, in the index, about evenly between the statements that “Peter came to Rome and died there” and that “Peter established his See at Rome and made the Bishop of Rome his successor in the primacy.” A few examples must suffice, but they and other early references demonstrate there can be no question that the universal—and very early—position (one hesitates to use the word “tradition”, since some people read it as “legend”) was that Peter resided and was martyred in the capital of the Empire.

Dionysius of Corinth, writing to Soter, the twelfth Pope, about 170, said, “You have also, by your very admonition, brought together the planting that was made by Peter and Paul at Rome.”⁵ It was commonly accepted, from the very first, that both Peter and Paul were martyred at Rome, probably in the Neronian persecution.

A generation later Tertullian noted, “How happy is that Church . . . where Peter endured a passion like that of the Lord, where Paul was crowned in a death like John’s” ⁶ (referring to John the Baptist, as both he and Paul were beheaded). Fundamentalists admit Paul died in Rome, so the implication from Tertullian is that Peter also must have been there. In the same work Tertullian said, “This is the way in which the apostolic Churches transmit their lists: like the Church of the Smyrnaeans, which records that Polycarp was placed there by John; like the Church of the Romans, where Clement was ordained by Peter”.⁷ This Clement, known as Clement of Rome, later would be the fourth Pope. (Note that Tertullian did not say Peter consecrated Clement as Pope, which would have been impossible since a Pope does not name his own successor; he merely ordained Clement as priest.) Clement wrote his Letter to the Corinthians perhaps before 70,⁸ just a few years after Peter and Paul were killed; in it he made reference to Peter ending his life where Paul ended his.

In writing to them around 110, Ignatius of Antioch remarked he could not command the Roman Christians the way Peter and Paul once did,⁹ such a comment making sense only if Peter had been a leader, if not the leader, of the Church in Rome.

Near the end of the second century, Irenaeus mentioned that Matthew wrote his Gospel “while Peter and Paul were evangelizing in Rome and laying the foundation of the Church”. He said the two departed Rome, perhaps to attend the Council of Jerusalem, and he noted that Linus was

named as Peter's successor—that is, the second Pope—and that next in line were Anacletus (also known as Cletus) and then Clement of Rome.¹⁰

Clement of Alexandria wrote at the turn of the third century. A fragment of one of his works is preserved in Eusebius of Caesarea's *Ecclesiastical History*, the first history of the Church. Clement wrote, "When Peter preached the Word publicly at Rome, and declared the Gospel by the Spirit, many who were present requested that Mark, who had been for a long time his follower and who remembered his sayings, should write down what had been proclaimed."¹¹

Peter of Alexandria was bishop of that city and died around 311. A few years before his death he wrote a treatise on penance. In it he said, "Peter, the first chosen of the apostles, having been apprehended often and thrown into prison and treated with ignominy, at last was crucified in Rome."¹² Seven years later, Lactantius noted that "when Nero was already reigning Peter came to Rome, where, in virtue of the performance of certain miracles which he worked by that power of God which had been given to him, he converted many to righteousness and established a firm and steadfast temple to God."¹³ Nero reigned from 54 to 68.

Eusebius Pamphilius gave more precise dates than did Lactantius. He said that in 42 (he actually said the "second year of the two hundredth and fifth olympiad") "the apostle Peter, after he has established the Church in Antioch, is sent to Rome, where he remains as bishop of that city, preaching the Gospel for twenty-five years." He went on to say that "Nero is the first, in addition to all his other crimes, to make a persecution against the Christians, in which Peter and Paul died gloriously at Rome."¹⁴

These citations could be multiplied. It should be enough to note that no ancient writer claimed Peter ended his life elsewhere than in Rome. True, many refer to the fact that he was at one point in Antioch, but most go on to say he went on from there to the capital. Remember, these are the works that form the basis of Christian historical writing in the immediate post-New Testament centuries. On the question of Peter's whereabouts they are in agreement, and their cumulative testimony should carry considerable weight.

To sum up, Boettner does not know what he is talking about when he claims there is no "historical proof of any kind" and that "all rests on legend". The truth is that *all* the historical evidence is on the side of the Catholic position.

Continuing, Boettner, like other fundamentalist apologists, claims that

“exhaustive research by archaeologists has been made down through the centuries to find some inscription in the Catacombs and other ruins of ancient places in Rome that would indicate Peter at least visited Rome. But the only things found which gave any promise at all were some bones of uncertain origin.”¹⁵ Boettner saw *Roman Catholicism* through the presses in 1962. His original book and the revisions to it since have failed to mention the results of the excavations under the high altar of St. Peter’s Basilica, excavations that had been under way for decades but that were undertaken in earnest after World War II.

Pope Paul VI was able to announce officially something that had been discussed in archaeological literature and religious publications for years, that the actual tomb of the first Pope had been identified conclusively, that his remains were apparently present, and that in the vicinity of his tomb were inscriptions identifying the place as Peter’s burial site, meaning early Christians knew that the Prince of the Apostles was there. The story of how all this was determined, with scientific accuracy, is too long to recount here. It is discussed in detail in John Evangelist Walsh’s *The Bones of St. Peter*.¹⁶

It is enough to say that the combination of historical and scientific evidence is such that no one willing to look at the facts with an open mind can doubt that Peter was in Rome. To deny that fact is to let prejudice override reason. Grant, then, that Peter really was in Rome and really died and was buried there. What can be said about him, particularly from Scripture? Fundamentalists say he was just the equal of the other apostles, not their leader. He enjoyed no primacy, and he was granted by Christ no powers not given to the others.

In fact, there is ample evidence in the New Testament that Peter was first in authority among the apostles. When they were named, Peter almost always headed the list (Mt 10:1-4; Mk 3:16-19; Lk 6:14-16; Acts 1:13); sometimes it was only “Peter and his companions” (Lk 9:32). Peter was the one who generally spoke for the apostles (Mt 18:21; Mk 8:29; Lk 12:41; Jn 6:69), and he figured in many of the most dramatic scenes (Mt 14:28-32; 17:24; Mk 10:28). On Pentecost it was he who first preached to the crowds (Acts 2:14-40), and he worked the first healing (Acts 3:6-7). And to Peter came the revelation that Gentiles were to be baptized (Acts 10:46-48).

Peter’s preeminent position among the apostles was symbolized at the very beginning of his relationship with Christ, although the implications were only slowly unfolded. At their first meeting, Christ told Simon that his name

would thereafter be Peter, which translates as Rock (Jn 1:42). The startling thing was that in the Old Testament only God was called a rock. The word was never used as a proper name for a man. If one were to turn to a companion and say, "From now on your name is Asparagus", people would wonder. Why Asparagus? What is the meaning of it? What does it signify? Indeed, why Peter for Simon the fisherman? Why give him as a name a word only used for God before this moment?

Christ was not given to meaningless gestures, and neither were the Jews as a whole when it came to names. Giving a new name meant that the status of the person was changed, as when Abram was changed to Abraham (Gen 17:5); Jacob to Israel (Gen 32:28); Eliacim to Joakim (2 Kings 23:34); and Daniel, Ananias, Misael, and Azarias to Baltassar, Sidrach, Misach, and Abdenago (Dan 1:6-8). But no Jew had ever been called Rock because that was reserved for God. The Jews would give other names taken from nature, such as Barach (which means lightning; Jos 19:45), Deborah (bee; Gen 35:8), and Rachel (ewe; Gen 29:16), but not Rock. In the New Testament James and John were surnamed Boanerges, Sons of Thunder, by Christ (Mk 3:17), but that was never regularly used in place of their original names. Simon's new name supplanted the old.

Not only was there significance in Simon being given a name that had been used only to describe God, but the place where the renaming occurred was also important. "Then Jesus came into the neighborhood of Caesarea Philippi" (Mt 16:13), a city that Philip the Tetrarch built and named in honor of Caesar Augustus, who had died in A.D. 14. The city lay near cascades in the Jordan River and not far from a gigantic wall of rock two hundred feet high and five hundred feet long, part of the southern foothills of Mount Hermon.¹⁷

Caesarea Philippi is no more. Near its ruins is the small Arab town of Banias, and at the base of the rock wall may be found what is left of one of the springs that fed the Jordan. It was here that Jesus pointed to Simon and said, "Thou art Peter" (Mt 16:18). The significance of the event must have been clear to the other apostles. As devout Jews they knew at once that the location was meant to emphasize the importance of what was being done.

None complained of Simon being singled out for this honor, and in the rest of the New Testament he is called by his new name, while James and John remain just James and John, not Boanerges.

When he first saw Simon, "Jesus looked at him closely and said, 'Thou art Simon the son of Jonah; thou shalt be called Cephas' (which means the same

as Peter)” (Jn 1:42). The word Cephas is merely the transliteration of the Aramaic *Kepha* into Greek. *Kepha* means rock. Later, after Peter and the other disciples had been with Christ for some time, they went to Caesarea Philippi, where Peter made his profession of faith: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mt 16:17). Jesus told Peter that this truth was revealed to him specially, and then he reiterated: “Thou art Peter” (Mt 16:18). To this was added the promise that the Church that would be founded would, in some way, be founded on Peter (Mt 16:18).

Then two important things were told the apostle. “Whatever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; whatever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Mt 16:19). Here Peter was singled out for the authority that provides for the forgiveness of sins and the making of disciplinary rules. Later the apostles as a whole would be given similar power, but here Peter received it in a special sense; the later grant to them did not diminish the uniqueness of what was granted Peter. Indeed, Peter alone was promised something else. “I will give to thee [singular] the keys to the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 16:19). In ancient times keys were the hallmark of authority. A walled city might have one great gate and that gate one great lock worked by one great key. To be given the key to the city (an honor that exists even today, although its import is largely lost) meant to be given free access to and authority over the city. The city to which Peter was given the keys was the heavenly city itself. This symbolism for authority is used elsewhere in the Bible (Is 22:22; Rev 1:18).

Finally, after the Resurrection, Jesus appeared to his disciples and asked Peter three times, “Dost thou love me?” (Jn 21:15-17). In expiation of his threefold denial, Peter gave a threefold affirmation of love. Then Christ, who is the Good Shepherd (Jn 10:11, 14), gave Peter all the authority he earlier promised: “Feed my sheep” (Jn 21:17). Thus was completed the prediction made just before Jesus and his followers went for the last time to Olivet.

Immediately before his denials were predicted, Peter was told, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has claimed power over you all, so that he can sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for thee [singular], that thy faith may not fail; when, after a while, thou hast come back to me [after the denials], it is for thee to be the support of thy brethren” (Lk 22:31-32). Christ prayed that Peter would have faith that would never fail, that he would be a guide for the others, and Christ’s prayer, being perfectly efficacious, was sure to be fulfilled. Here we see the roots of papal infallibility and the primacy that is

the Bishop of Rome's.

Now take a closer look at the key verse: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church" (Mt 16:18). Disputes about this line have always concerned the meaning of the term rock. To whom, or to what, does it refer? Since Simon's fresh name of Peter itself means rock, the sentence could be rewritten as: "Thou art Rock and upon this rock I will build my Church." The play on words seems obvious, but commentators wishing to avoid what follows from this—the establishment of the papacy—have suggested that the word rock could not refer to Peter but must refer to his profession of faith or to Christ.

According to the rules of grammar, the phrase "this rock" must relate to the closest noun. Peter's profession of faith ("Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God") is two verses earlier, while his name, a proper noun, is in the immediately preceding clause. As an analogy, consider this artificial sentence: "I have a car and a truck, and it is blue." Which is blue? The truck, because that is the noun closest to the pronoun "it". This identification would be even clearer if the reference to the car were two sentences earlier, as the reference to Peter's profession is two sentences earlier than the term rock.

The same kind of objection applies to the argument that the rock is Christ himself, since he is mentioned within the profession of faith. The fact that he is elsewhere, by a different metaphor, called the cornerstone (Eph 2:20; 1 Pet 2:4-8) does not disprove that here Peter is the foundation. Christ is naturally the principal and, since he will be returning to heaven, the invisible foundation of the Church that will be established, but Peter is named by him as the secondary and, because he and his successors will remain on earth, the visible foundation. Peter can be a foundation only because first Christ is one.

There is another analogy. At times we ask our friends to pray for us, and we pray for them. Our prayers ask God for special help for one another. When we pray in this way, what are we doing? We are acting as mediators, as go-betweens. We are approaching God on someone else's behalf. Does this contradict Paul's statement that Christ is the one mediator (1 Tim 2:5)? No, because our mediatorship is entirely secondary to and dependent on his. He could have established his mediatorship in any way he chose, and he chose to have us participate when he commanded us to pray for one another (Mt 5:44; 1 Tim 2:1-4; Rom 15:30; Acts 12:5), even for the dead (2 Tim 1:16-18). So, just as there can be secondary mediators and a primary one, there can be a secondary foundation and a primary one.

Opponents of the Catholic interpretation of Matthew 16:18 also note that in the Greek text the name of the apostle is *Petros*, a masculine noun, while rock is rendered as *petra*, which is feminine. The first means a small stone, the second a massive rock. If Peter was meant to be the massive rock, the steady foundation of the Church here below, why is his name not *Petra*? As Loraine Boettner puts it in *Roman Catholicism*, “The Greek *petros* is commonly used of a small, movable stone, a mere pebble, as it were. But *petra* means an immovable foundation, in this instance, the basic truth that Peter had just confessed, the deity of Christ.”¹⁸ The Bible is clear on this point: Peter was no sure foundation.

Boettner continues by saying, “Had Christ intended to say that the Church would be founded on Peter, it would have been ridiculous for Him to have shifted to the feminine form of the word in the middle of the statement, saying, if we may translate literally and somewhat whimsically, ‘And I say unto thee, that thou art Mr. Rock, and upon this, the Miss Rock, I will build my church.’ . . . He made two complete, distinct statements. He said, ‘Thou art Peter,’ and, ‘Upon this rock (change of gender, indicating change of subject) I will build my church.’ ”¹⁹ Boettner’s “whimsy” obscures the straightforward solution to this problem.

The first thing to note is that Christ did not speak to the disciples in Greek. (And not Hebrew, either, which was reserved as a sacred language and was not in common use, somewhat analogously to the way Latin, in the recent past, was the sacred language for Catholics, but was not used by them in everyday speech.) Christ spoke Aramaic, the common language of Palestine at the time. In that language the word for rock is *kepha*. What was said was thus: “Thou art *Kepha*, and upon this *kepha* I will build my Church.” When Matthew’s Gospel was translated from the original Aramaic to Greek,²⁰ there arose a problem that did not confront the evangelist when he first composed his account of Christ’s life in his native tongue.

In Aramaic the word *kepha* has the same ending whether it refers to a rock or is used as a man’s name. In Greek, though, the word for rock, *petra*, is feminine in gender. The translator could use it for the second appearance of *kepha* in the sentence, but not for the first, because it would be inappropriate to give a man a feminine name. So he put a masculine ending on it, and there was *Petros*, which happened to be a preexisting word meaning a small stone. Some of the effect of the play on words was lost, but that was the best that could be done in Greek. In English, as in Aramaic, there is no problem with

endings, so an English rendering could read: “Thou art Rock, and upon this rock I will build my church.” In modern French Bibles, the word *pierre* appears in both places. The real meaning is hard to miss.

Another point: If the rock really did refer to Christ, as fundamentalists claim (basing their argument on 1 Corinthians 10:4, “and the rock was Christ”), why did Matthew leave the passage as it was? In the original Aramaic, and in the English that is a closer parallel to it than is the Greek, the passage seems clear enough. Matthew must have realized that his readers would conclude the obvious from “Rock . . . rock”. If he meant Christ to be understood as the rock, why did he not say so? Why did he construct his sentences so awkwardly that contortions would be required to elicit the fundamentalist interpretation? Why did he take a chance and leave it up to Paul to write a clarifying text (presuming, of course, that 1 Corinthians was written after Matthew, as most biblical scholars assert; if it came first, it could not have been written to clarify it)?

The reason, of course, is that Matthew knew full well that what the sentence seemed to say was just what it really was saying. It was Simon—weak, Christ-denying Simon—who was chosen to be the first link in the chain of the papacy. The scandal, to fundamentalists, is that Christ would choose as his Vicar the weakest of the apostles, not the strongest. But God seems to enjoy working through the lowly in order to confound the mighty, and his choice of Peter was quite in keeping with other selections he had made, such as deciding to be born in a stable rather than a palace. In a way, it was Peter’s weakness that would manifest the strength of the papacy. After all, noted G. K. Chesterton when writing of the succession of popes, a chain is only as strong as its weakest link.²¹

Still, however apt Chesterton’s comment might be, a fundamentalist will not see it as supporting the Catholic position since it presumes the divine establishment of the papacy. His mind will turn, instead, to snatches of ecclesiastical history he has imbibed from visiting preachers or from anti-Catholic literature. What will stick in his mind is the claim that the papacy has achieved its position of authority through purely human machinations. Providence, he has been told, had nothing to do with it.

This is the theme of Henry T. Hudson’s *Papal Power*,²² published in an attractive paperback format in England, but printed and distributed in America. This may be the most exhaustive look at the papacy to come from the hands of a fundamentalist in recent years. In five chapters Hudson

examines the “origins of papal power”, the development of the papacy before the Reformation, Luther’s attack on the papacy, the further development of the institution after the Reformation, and papal claims in light of Scripture. (The chapter on Luther really does not focus on the Reformer’s analysis of the papacy; it is better described as plain hagiography.)

In the introduction Hudson comments on the 1979 visit of John Paul II to the United States and asks, “Whatever happened to the traditional anti-papal sentiments common in American history?”²³ In a footnote he points out that Loraine Boettner has said that two-thirds of the American population in 1776 was Reformed Protestant. Hudson longs for the good old days.

His appreciations of ecclesiastical history and biblical criticism are not without weaknesses. He believes, for instance, that the papacy was supremely strong during the Middle Ages, when in fact the Popes were at the mercy of princes and were largely ignored by irreformable bishops and persnickety abbots. He thinks Rome was without influence in the earliest ecumenical councils, when in fact the popes sent legates and formally approved the councils’ decisions. With respect to Peter’s presence in Rome, Hudson thinks Paul’s statement that “only Luke is with me” (2 Tim 4:11) settles the matter. “This is conclusive.”²⁴ If it is, it is *too* conclusive. If the line proves Peter was not in Rome, it also proves no Christians, other than Luke and Paul, were there. Yet Paul wrote an epistle to the Christians in Rome, who apparently were numerous. Were they all out of town when 2 Timothy was written? If so, why was Luke still around?

When the interpretation of Matthew 16:18 is the question, Hudson is satisfied to say, “A simple, straightforward consideration of the grammatical construction seems to rule out Peter as the *petra*.”²⁵ If he is to be satisfied with simple, straightforward grammatical constructions, why no mention of the Aramaic, which is even simpler than the Greek and which states: “Thou art *Kepha*, and upon this *kepha* I will build my Church”? This seems to say the rock is Peter, but Hudson makes no allusion to the Catholic arguments.

His book’s key contention, what distinguishes it from other anti-Catholic works (not because other anti-Catholics would disagree, but because few of them bother to discuss the matter), is that the papacy obtained its exalted position through fraud. Hudson discusses at length forgeries on which the Popes supposedly built their power. It is quite true there were forgeries, and they were used, long after the events they purport to describe, to bolster Rome’s position, but commentators of almost all stripes, save the

fundamentalist, agree the forgeries had little or no practical effect. The papacy already was established firmly when the forgeries first appeared, and documents such as the Donation of Constantine and the False Decretals added little to the status of the institution. Granted, it was imprudent for any Church official to base an argument on them, and Lorenzo Valla's *Discourse on the Forgery of the Alleged Donation of Constantine*, which appeared in 1440, made many scholars look incompetent, but the fact remains that the papacy would have been what it was with or without the forgeries. They had far less effect on the institution than Parson Weems' biography had on the American public's perception of George Washington.

The curious thing is that, although Hudson decries forgeries used by partisans of Rome, he says nothing against forgeries used by Hudson. The last seventeen pages of the book are nothing less than the complete transcript of the speech said to have been given by Bishop Josip Strossmayer at Vatican I in 1870. Hudson does not defend the speech against the charges that it is a forgery; he does not even imply that he knows of such charges. He accepts the speech's bona fides unquestioningly.

In doing so he demonstrates that while fundamentalists can produce tracts, newsletters, and even books in quantity, they rarely make any effort to test their claims against the Catholic version of the facts. They do not seem to know there *is* a Catholic version. How simple it would be to open the *Catholic Encyclopedia* and see, in the article on Strossmayer, that the speech attributed to him is a forgery. No one is obligated to accept the article writer's word for it, but sources are given, and with a little legwork the sources can be checked. But checking is not something professional anti-Catholics are inclined to do. They are not so much interested in accuracy as in effect.

Chapter 18

Infallibility of the Pope

Pretend for a moment a Pope is infallible not only in matters of faith or morals, but in trigonometry. He is presented with an examination consisting of one hundred trigonometry problems. What is the *least* number of problems he will answer correctly?

Someone who says “one hundred” may understand trigonometry, but his understanding of infallibility is no better than the average non-Catholic’s. The correct answer is: zero. Although infallible in trigonometry, the Pope might get none of the problems right. Being infallible in trigonometry would mean being prevented from putting down the wrong answers. It would not mean being able to put down the right ones. The answer sheet could be left entirely blank—and would be, if the Pope had not done his homework.

It is the same in real life. Through the guardianship of the Holy Spirit, the Pope is guaranteed not to teach error regarding faith or morals (presuming, of course, he intends to make an *ex cathedra* statement and is not speaking as a private scholar). But he cannot teach what is true unless he first knows what is true, and he learns that the same way we do.

Catholics who fail this quiz may appreciate why nearly all fundamentalists misunderstand infallibility. They do not know what infallibility means. Most of them hear “infallibility” and think “impeccability”. They think Catholics believe the Pope cannot sin. Those who do not make that elementary blunder imagine the Pope operates like Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, who claimed to have at one time the Old Testament’s Urim and Thummim. Smith repaired to his oracle to translate the Book of Mormon from the golden plates, or so he said, and most non-Catholics think the Pope relies on some sort of amulet or magical incantation when an infallible definition is due. Given this, it might be too much to expect the average fundamentalist to understand the niceties of infallibility. The first thing he would have to perceive (after being told the subject concerns the absence of error, not of sin) is that infallibility belongs to the body of bishops as a whole, when, in moral

unity, they teach a doctrine as true. “He who listens to you, listens to me” (Lk 10:16); “all that you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven” (Mt 18:18). Vatican II put it this way:

Although the individual bishops do not enjoy the prerogative of infallibility, they can nevertheless proclaim Christ’s doctrine infallibly. This is so, even when they are dispersed around the world, provided that while maintaining the bond of unity among themselves and with Peter’s successor, and while teaching authentically on a matter of faith or morals, they concur in a single viewpoint as the one which must be held conclusively. This authority is even more clearly verified when, gathered together in an ecumenical council, they are teachers and judges of faith and morals for the universal Church. Their definitions must then be adhered to with the submission of faith.

Infallibility belongs in a special way to the Pope as the head of the bishops (Mt 16:17-19; Jn 21:15-17) and is something he

enjoys in virtue of his office, when, as the supreme shepherd and teacher of all the faithful, who confirms his brethren in their faith (cf. Luke 22:32), he proclaims by a definitive act some doctrine of faith or morals. Therefore his definitions, of themselves, and not from the consent of the Church, are justly held irreformable, for they are pronounced with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, an assistance promised to him in blessed Peter.¹

The infallibility of the Pope is certainly a doctrine that has developed, but it is not one that sprang out of nowhere in 1870. It is implicit in these Petrine texts: John 21:15-17 (“Feed my sheep. . .”); Luke 22:32 (“I have prayed for thee that thy faith may not fail”); Matthew 16:18 (“Thou art Peter. . .”). Christ instructed the Church to preach the good news (Mt 28; 19-20) and promised the protection of the Holy Spirit “to guide you into all truth” (Jn 16:13). That mandate and that promise guarantee that the Church will never fall away from his teachings (1 Tim 3:15), even if individual Catholics might. The inability of the Church to teach error is infallibility, and it is a negative protection. It means what is officially taught will not be wrong, not that the official teachers will have the wits about them to stand up and teach what is right when it needs to be taught.

As Christians got clearer and clearer notions of the teaching authority of the whole Church and of the primacy of the Pope, they got clearer notions of the Pope’s own infallibility. This happened early on. In 433 Pope Sixtus III declared that to assent to the Bishop of Rome’s decision is to assent to Peter, who lives in his successors and whose faith does not fail.² Cyprian of Carthage, writing about 256, asked: “Would heretics dare to come to the very seat of Peter whence apostolic faith is derived and whither no errors can

come?”³ Augustine of Hippo summed up the ancient attitude when he remarked, “Rome has spoken; the case is closed.”⁴

Leslie Rumble and Charles M. Carty, the famed radio priests of two generations ago, put it this way:

Before the definition of infallibility in 1870, the Popes did not know they were infallible with the same full certainty of faith as that possessed by later Popes. But they were infallible in fact. The gift of papal infallibility was essential to the Church, not the definition of the gift. You wonder why it was defined only in 1870. But definitions are not given unnecessarily. If no discussion arises on a given point, and no one disputes it, there is no need for a definition. But in the seventeenth century the question of the Pope’s doctrinal authority came more and more to the front, until in 1870, the Vatican Council was asked to settle the question once and for all. The time had come for the Church to know herself fully on this point.⁵

An infallible papal pronouncement is made only when some doctrine is called into question. Most have never been doubted by the vast majority of Catholics, although, at any one time, one could find someone to discount nearly any belief. Pick up a catechism and look at the great number of doctrines, most of which have never been formally defined by an *ex cathedra* papal statement. There are, in fact, few topics on which it would be possible for the Pope to make an infallible decision without seconding infallible pronouncements from some other source, such as an ecumenical council or the unanimous teaching of the Fathers.⁶

At least the outline, if not the text references, of the preceding paragraphs should be familiar to literate Catholics, to whom this subject should seem reasonably straightforward. It is a different story for fundamentalists. For them papal infallibility seems a muddle because their idea of what it covers is muddled.

Joseph Zacchello, ordained a priest in Italy and sent to the United States to serve Italian-Americans, converted to “Bible Christianity” in 1944. Four years later he published *Secrets of Romanism*. Because of the resurgence of anti-Catholic sentiment, the book has been reprinted recently. Zacchello argues against papal infallibility on the ground that it “is powerless to prevent divisions. Popes have anathematized other Popes, Councils have contradicted Councils, and doctors of theology have violently opposed other doctors.” Besides, he notes, “the Roman Church often had two Popes; and once there were three rival Popes at one time (the Great Western Schism 1378—1417).”⁷

This is confusing—and inaccurate. No Catholic ever claimed papal

infallibility would “prevent divisions”. Yes, some Popes have contradicted other Popes, in their private opinions or with respect to disciplinary rulings, but never has any Pope officially contradicted what an earlier Pope officially taught about faith or morals. The same may be said about ecumenical councils, which also teach infallibly. No ecumenical council has ever contradicted the teaching of an earlier ecumenical council on faith or morals. Have “doctors of theology . . . violently opposed other doctors”? Of course, but Catholics do not hold that theologians are infallible, so disagreement between them is immaterial, and certainly the fact that they may disagree with one another says nothing about the existence of papal infallibility.

Consider Zacchello’s misleading comment about the Great Western Schism, What happened was this. In 1378 Urban VI was lawfully elected Pope. Some cardinals thought he was not properly elected, so they elected another man, Clement VII. There were good men on both sides, supporters of each claimant honestly thinking they were backing the real Pope. No one imagined there could be two Popes at once. To settle the dispute, another group of cardinals exceeded their rights and declared both Urban and Clement deposed. They elected still a third claimant, Alexander V. All this time, Urban was the authentic Pope. Eventually he died, as did his rivals. Urban’s third successor was Gregory XII. In order to end the confusion, which by this time had lasted nearly forty years, a council was convened, and Gregory resigned. The successors to Clement and Alexander were declared to have been improperly elected, and a new Pope, Martin V, was elected. In all these years there was never any question about there being more than one Pope; there was only a mistake among the faithful regarding who was the legitimate successor to the Prince of the Apostles.

It is at least as bad with Ralph Woodrow, author of *Babylon Mystery Religion*. He says, “People naturally question how infallibility could be linked with the papal office when some of the popes had been very poor examples in morals and integrity.” But he at once recognizes that he is confusing infallibility with impeccability, so he covers himself by saying, “And if the infallibility be applied only to doctrines pronounced by the popes, how was it that some popes disagreed with other popes?”⁸ He wants to have it both ways; he gets more mileage out of his argument if the reader thinks infallibility and impeccability are identical, but he makes allowances for some readers knowing the difference.

After recounting the admittedly bizarre case of Pope Formosus, whose

corpse was disinterred and placed in the dock during a posthumous trial, Woodrow claims “such sharp disagreement between popes certainly argues against the ideal of papal infallibility”,⁹ This evinces a basic confusion, since the issue must always be phrased this way: Have two popes disagreed when officially teaching on faith or morals? The Formosus case had nothing to do with any such teaching or any such disagreement.

Formosus had been the bishop of Porto, and he was elected Pope at a time when it was considered improper for a bishop to transfer from one see to another. This was merely a disciplinary rule and did not invalidate his election. His second successor, Stephen VII, prompted by the emperor, Lambert, found it politically expedient to declare that Formosus had become Pope improperly and that his ordinations were consequently invalid. Thus the trial. Formosus was found “guilty”, and his ordinations were declared null. So, there certainly was a disagreement (if that is the proper word) between Formosus, by then dead, and Stephen, but the posthumous trial, no matter how repugnant, had nothing to do with a definition regarding faith or morals, so the question of papal infallibility simply does not apply.

Woodrow continues by pointing out that “Pope Sixtus V had a version of the Bible prepared which he declared to be authentic. Two years later Pope Clement VIII declared that it was full of errors and ordered another to be made!”¹⁰ And he says, “When we consider the hundreds of times and ways that popes have contradicted each other over the centuries, we can understand how the idea of papal infallibility is difficult for many people to accept. While it is true that most papal statements are not made within the narrow confines of the 1870 *ex cathedra* definition, yet if popes have erred in so many other ways, how can we believe they are guaranteed a divine infallibility for a few moments if and when they should indeed decide to speak *ex cathedra*?”¹¹

It is unsurprising that Woodrow ends his chapter on papal infallibility with an exercise in numerology, noting that “as early as 1612 it was pointed out, as Andreas Helwig did in his book *Roman Antichrist*, that the title ‘Vicar of Christ’ has a numerical value of 666.” When written as “Vicar of the Son of God”, *Vicarius Filii Dei*, the letters sum to 666, if the Roman values are used. “The number reminds us, of course, of Revelation 13:18, ‘Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore and six.’ ”

There are several things wrong with this argument. *Vicarius Filii Dei* never

has been used as a title by any Pope. The Pope's full title is Bishop of Rome, Vicar of Jesus Christ [or, more simply, Vicar of Christ—*Vicarius Christi*], Successor of the Prince of the Apostles, Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church, Patriarch of the West, Primate of Italy, Archbishop and Metropolitan of the Roman Province, and Sovereign of the City of the Vatican.

Latin, like most other ancient languages, used letters to represent numbers. The letters of *Vicarius Filii Dei* do indeed add up to 666. The letters of *Vicarius Christi* do not. Anti-Catholic pundits, unable to use *Vicarius Christi*—the Pope's real title—to their advantage, turn to a similar-sounding title and claim—voila!—that the Pope is the beast.¹²

In doing this, these opponents of Catholicism overlook an important fact. The last book of the Bible was written in Greek, not Latin. We should expect “the number of the beast” to be understood through Greek numerology, not Latin. The name or title that totals 666 should be based on Greek. But there is a way that Latin figures in, although it does not help the anti-Catholics' argument.

By the end of the second century there were in circulation manuscripts that gave “the number of the beast” as 616 instead of 666. Why this discrepancy? Apparently there was confusion on the part of one or more copyists, and that confusion gives credence to the most widely accepted theory about the identity of the beast, that the beast was Nero Caesar,

The Greek form of his name in Hebrew letters is *nrwn qsr*. Each letter stands for a number (n = 30, r = 200, w = 6, q = 100, s = 60), Adding up the letters (50 + 200 + 6 + 50 + 100 + 60 + 200) yields 666. The Latin form of his name, when given in Hebrew letters, is slightly different: *nrw qsr*. Its letters total 616, the alternative reading of the manuscripts. It may have been natural for copyists whose mother tongue was Latin, knowing the reference was to Nero, to presume 666 was an error and that 616 was the true number. They may have “corrected” what they perceived to be an error. So we see the earliest manuscripts giving 666 and some later manuscripts—copied when Latin had become the lingua franca of the Mediterranean—giving 616.

Not only does Nero's name work out arithmetically, and not only does identifying him as the beast account for the manuscript evidence, but he fits the context of Revelation. He was the first emperor to persecute Christians, and he would have been the perfect choice for the beast. So vigorous were his persecutions, in fact, that it was rumored Nero came to life again in one of his successors, Domitian, who was also a persecutor. Domitian was known as

Nero redivivus.

In any event, whatever the real identity of the beast, Ralph Woodrow gives no good reason for tying the number 666 to the papacy. The best he can do is to use a misrepresentation as a proof. Like other anti-Catholics, he so desperately wants the beast to be identified with the papacy that he does not bother to stick with the facts.

But Woodrow and his arguments are too easy to dismiss. The best attack by a fundamentalist is given, as usual, by Loraine Boettner in his *Roman Catholicism*. As mentioned in a previous chapter, he begins with a error large even by his standard. “Infallibility is not claimed for every statement made by the pope,” he says, “but only for those made when he is speaking *ex cathedra*, that is, seated in his papal chair, the chair of St. Peter, and speaking in his official capacity as head of the church,”¹³ At this point an asterisk leads one to a footnote that states that the chair venerated as Peter’s comes from the ninth century and is of French origin. “It is not an antique of the first century”, the point being, apparently, that even if papal infallibility were theoretically possible, it is not possible in practice since today’s Popes are unable to sit in Peter’s actual chair.

Chair or no chair, Popes keep publishing their decisions, and Boettner has to deal with that fact. “It is interesting to notice that the popes, in issuing their decrees or pronouncements, do not label them *ex cathedra* or not *ex cathedra*. We may be sure that if this power were a reality they would not hesitate so to label them, that in fact they would find it very advantageous to do so. Surely it would be of inestimable value to know which deliverances are *ex cathedra* and which are not, which are infallible and authoritative and which are only private observations and therefore as fallible as those of anyone else.”¹⁴ Boettner’s appreciation of human nature is modest. To insert in all noninfallible pronouncements a note that “this is *not ex cathedra*” would be to invite everyone to commit Boettner’s error, which is to think the Pope’s noninfallible teachings are “therefore as fallible as those of anyone else”. Precisely because the Pope “does his homework”, and because of the way he prepares his statements, and because he is who he is, they are far less likely to be fallible—that is, wrong—than those given by others. The Pope speaks not off the top of his head, but from a tradition of right teaching.

The author of *Roman Catholicism* is unable to resist quoting a famous Catholic historian: “How true the words of England’s Lord Acton, himself a Roman Catholic, who after visiting Rome and seeing at firsthand the

workings of the papacy wrote: ‘All power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.’ ”¹⁵ First of all, Boettner gives the standard misquotation. Acton actually said, “Power *tends* to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” He wrote this in a letter to Anglican Bishop Mandell Creighton on April 5, 1887, long after Vatican I. Second, Boettner fantasizes that Acton had the same kind of shock Martin Luther supposedly had when the monk first visited Rome, but Acton was long familiar with the place. Besides, his aphorism was in reference not just to Popes, but to kings and all men in positions of authority. To imply he was limiting his comment to the papacy, to suggest he was indicating rejection of papal infallibility, is to give a false impression of what he was saying.

Nevertheless, Boettner is far more accurate than Woodrow: “The doctrine of papal infallibility does not mean that the pope is infallible as a man. It does not relate to his personal habits. It does not mean that he is sinless. Nor does it mean that he is inspired as were the apostles so that he can write Scripture.” So far he is correct. But he immediately goes wrong, though not as egregiously as others: “It means rather that in his official capacity as teacher of the church he has the guidance of the Holy Spirit so that he can interpret and state clearly and positively doctrines which allegedly have been a part of the heritage of the church from the beginning.”¹⁶ Boettner does not quite grasp what infallibility covers. He does not understand that it is a negative protection and that a Pope too lazy to do his homework would not be able to make an infallible decision on anything. The charism of infallibility does not help a Pope know what is true, nor does it “inspire” him to teach what is true.

Boettner also errs, somewhat more subtly, in saying that “for centuries before the doctrine of papal infallibility was adopted there was much difference of opinion as to where that infallibility lay. . . . But in 1870 it was declared to reside in the pope alone, and all good Catholics are now compelled to accept that view.”¹⁷ Vatican I did not say infallibility resides in the Pope alone, for the very good reason that it resides also in the bishops teaching in union with the Pope.

As a biblical example of the fallibility of Popes, Boettner gives this: “That Peter, the alleged first pope, was not infallible as a teacher of faith and morals is evident from his conduct at Antioch when he refused to eat with Gentile Christians lest he offend certain Jews from Palestine (Gal. 2:11-16). Instead, he would have fastened the ritual requirements of Judaism on the new Christian church. This should have been no problem at all for him if he had

the special guidance of the Holy Spirit claimed by the Church of Rome for the pope.”¹⁸ Here Boettner imagines infallibility to be something like inspiration, and, like other fundamentalist writers, he never seems to apply to particular cases the standards of Vatican I. It may be because he, like his followers, confuses doctrine and morals with discipline and customs. Peter’s conduct at Antioch was not an attempt by him to teach formally on doctrine or morals.

Boettner caps his attack with a commentary on John Henry Newman. “It is well known that Cardinal Newman was strongly opposed to the promulgation of the doctrine of infallibility.” That much is true, but with the next sentence Boettner goes awry. “But having left the Church of England in order to join the Roman Church and having given it such fulsome praise, he was powerless to prevent the change and did not have the courage to come back out of it. . . . It was a bitter pill for Newman to swallow, but he submitted and acknowledged papal infallibility.”¹⁹ There are two things wrong with this analysis (or psychoanalysis). First, the implication that doctrine was being changed. It was not; it was just being made explicit. This point one can let slide. The libel of Newman is another thing altogether. Boettner apparently never read, or if he read he quickly forgot, the seventh part of Newman’s *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, the part titled “General Answer to Mr. Kingsley”. It is here that Newman examined infallibility. He wrote in 1864—six years before the definition given at Vatican I—about a problem that he wrestled with before his conversion in 1845.

Boettner will have us think Newman had no suspicion that papal infallibility might be a fact and, when it appeared that it would be proclaimed, he found that he had converted for the worse. Even if this were a true account of Newman’s thinking, which it is not, why did Newman not leave the Catholic Church if he thought papal infallibility nonexistent? After all, in 1845 he left the secure and socially acceptable established church for what in England was the inconsequential and outcast Roman Catholic Church. Reconverting would have been easy by comparison, particularly if he could refer to some papal usurpation. Why didn’t he? Because he not only accepted papal infallibility, he believed in it—and had since before he had become a Catholic. He opposed not the content of the definition given at Vatican I, but the wisdom of promulgating the definition at that time; he thought the promulgation was inopportune, not inaccurate.

Like other anti-Catholic writers, Boettner cites a number of “errors of the

popes”. With respect to what he identifies as doctrinal matters, he lists a dozen instances, most of which have nothing to do with the question at hand. For instance: “Zozimus (417—418) pronounced Pelagius an orthodox teacher, but later reversed his position at the insistence of Augustine.”²⁰ This demonstrates nothing more than that Augustine provided Zozimus with additional information on Pelagius, so the Pope had a more complete appreciation of the man’s doctrines. Besides, declaring a particular individual orthodox or unorthodox is simply not an attempted exercise of infallibility. Continuing, Boettner asks, “How is the decree of Clement XIV (July 21, 1773) suppressing the Jesuits to be harmonized with the contrary decree of Pius VII (August 7, 1814) restoring them?”²¹ Again, neither decree had anything to do with teaching faith or morals; each was purely a disciplinary matter.

Boettner’s argument is really reduced to three cases, those of Popes Liberius, Vigilius, and Honorius, the three cases to which all opponents of papal infallibility repair because they are the only cases that do not collapse as soon as they are mentioned. None of the instances can be shoehorned into the 1870 definition.

Boettner claims “Liberius, in 358, subscribed to a heretical Arian creed in order to gain the bishopric of Rome under the heretical emperor Constantius.”²² If Liberius did this—which, apparently, he did not—it would prove nothing, since his subscribing to a heresy *before* becoming Pope could have nothing to do with an exercise of papal infallibility. Infallibility is not retroactive. Election to the papacy does not validate a man’s earlier teachings.

Most commentators who bring up Liberius, it must be said, make a charge different from Boettner’s. They say Liberius subscribed to a heretical formula while he was Pope. In fact what he put his signature to was an ambiguous document that could be understood in either an orthodox or a heretical manner. When he did this he was not a free agent, since he had been forced into exile by the emperor. Even if the document had been strictly heretical, admitting of no orthodox interpretation, and even if Liberius signed it voluntarily, the issue of infallibility still would not have arisen since he signed only as a private theologian and was not signing something that purported to be a teaching that was to be held by all Christians. The requirements for an infallible papal teaching simply were not met.

Vigilius, Boettner says, “refused to condemn certain heretical teachers of the time of the Monophysite controversy and boycotted the fifth Ecumenical

Council which met at Constantinople in 553. When the Council proceeded without him and threatened to excommunicate and anathematize him, he submitted to its opinions, confessing that he had been a tool of Satan.”²³ This misses the sense of what really happened. Emperor Justinian published a decree condemning the writings of three men long dead. Their writings were known as the Three Chapters, and the heresy to which they subscribed was Nestorianism, which held that in Christ there are two persons joined together, God the Son and the man Jesus. (The orthodox doctrine is that there is only one Person in Christ, the divine, but two natures.) Justinian’s decree was designed to please the Monophysites. Monophysitism was a heresy that arose as a reaction to Nestorianism; it held that in Christ there is only one nature, the divine. The decree was signed by the Eastern patriarchs, but other bishops objected, saying the decree undermined the orthodox position by seeming to favor Monophysitism by default. At first Vigilius refused to condemn the Three Chapters, but in 548 he did, at the same time affirming the orthodox position. Later he retracted his condemnation. He continued to vacillate, and the ecumenical council was called. The council condemned the Three Chapters, and finally Vigilius gave in, joining in the condemnation. Throughout all this, he supported the orthodox position. The controversy concerned the expediency of condemning certain writings and of judging three men who had long since been judged by God. Vigilius intended to condemn only what was condemnable in the Three Chapters, not what was orthodox. The drawn-out incident is certainly confusing, but it gives no support to the anti-infallibility position since Vigilius never asserted that a heretical belief was to be believed as true.

Then comes the last of the three standard cases, According to an authority Boettner cites, “The greatest scandal of this nature is pope Honorius. He specifically taught the Monothelite heresy in two letters to the patriarch of Constantinople.”²⁴ (Monothelitism arose as a reaction to Monophysitism. It held that in Christ there is only one will, the divine. The orthodox position is that in him there are two wills, the divine and the human, but the two wills are in perfect harmony.)

Actually, Honorius elected to teach nothing at all. Ronald Knox, in a letter to Arnold Lunn reprinted in their book *Difficulties*, put the matter like this: “And Honorius, so far from pronouncing an infallible opinion in the Monothelite controversy, was ‘quite extraordinarily not’ (as Gore used to say) pronouncing a decision at all. To the best of his human wisdom, he

thought the controversy ought to be left unsettled, for the greater peace of the Church. In fact, he was an inopportunist. We, wise after the event, say that he was wrong. But nobody, I think, has ever claimed that the Pope is infallible in *not* defining a doctrine.”²⁵

Summing up, Knox asked Lunn, “Has it ever occurred to you how few are the alleged ‘failures of infallibility’? I mean, if somebody propounded in your presence the thesis that all the kings of England have been impeccable, you would not find yourself murmuring, ‘Oh, well, people said rather unpleasant things about Jane Shore . . . and the best historians seem to think that Charles II spent too much of his time with Nell Gwynn.’ Here have these Popes been, fulminating anathema after anathema for centuries—certain in all human probability to contradict themselves or one another over again. Instead of which you get this measly crop of two or three alleged failures!”²⁶ He acknowledged that this does not prove infallibility, but it does make the anti-infallibility argument look weak.

After examining alleged failures relating to definitions of faith, Boettner looks at “infallibility in the moral sphere” and immediately stumbles. He forgets what he quoted from Vatican I a few pages earlier and considers cases that speak not against infallibility, but against impeccability. He cites a few well-worn instances of papal immorality, naming Popes John XI, John XII, and Alexander VI, but he mentions not one incorrect papal ruling on a question of morals. If a Pope proclaims *ex cathedra* that lying is a sin and then immediately tells a lie, infallibility is not disproved, although that Pope’s impeccability certainly is. For infallibility to be disproved, Boettner would have to show an *ex cathedra* definition stating that lying is moral. He offers no such example, or anything parallel, because none exists.

Fundamentalists’ rejection of papal infallibility stems from their view of the Church. They do not think Christ established a visible Church, which means they do not believe in a hierarchy of bishops headed by the Pope. This is no place to give an elaborate demonstration of the establishment of a visible Church. It is enough to note that the New Testament shows the apostles setting up, after their Master’s instructions, a visible organization, and every Christian writer in the early centuries—in fact, nearly all Christians until the Reformation—took it for granted that Christ set up an ongoing organization.

If he did, he must have provided for its continuation; for its easy identification (that is, it had to be visible so it could be found); and, since he

would be gone from Earth, for some method by which it could preserve intact all his teachings. All this was effected through the apostolic succession of bishops, and the preservation of the Christian message, in its fullness, was guaranteed through the gift of infallibility—of the Church as a whole, but mainly as enjoyed by the temporal head of the Church, the Pope.

The Holy Spirit prevents a Pope from officially teaching error, and this charism follows, necessarily, from the existence of the Church itself. If the Church is to do what Christ said it would—and not do what he said it would not do, such as have the gates of hell prevail against it—then it must be able to teach infallibly. It must prove itself to be a perfectly steady guide in matters pertaining to salvation. There is no guarantee that any particular Pope will not let slip by chances to teach the truth, or that he will be sinless, or that mere disciplinary decisions will be intelligently made. It would be convenient if he were omniscient or impeccable, but his not being so will not subvert the Church. But he must be able to teach rightly, for that is the main function of the Church. For men to be saved, they must know what is to be believed. They must have a perfectly steady rock to build on when it comes to official teaching, and that is why papal infallibility exists.

Chapter 19

The Eucharist

Fundamentalist attacks on the Church always come around, as they must, to the Eucharist. Keith Green devoted the first of his *Catholic Chronicles* to what he acknowledged to be the core devotional doctrine of Catholics, and he was smart to do so. Bart Brewer, Donald F. Maconaghie, Jimmy Swaggart—they all zero in on the Eucharist, and in doing so they demonstrate that fundamentalists, contrary to popular belief, are not always literalists. This is shown in their interpretation of the key scriptural passage, the sixth chapter of John's Gospel, in which Christ speaks about the sacrament that will be instituted at the Last Supper.

The narrative opens on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee with the feeding of the five thousand, the only miracle recorded by all four evangelists. After the people were fed, Jesus withdrew to the hillside to be alone. Night fell, and the disciples went down to the lake without him and, embarking in the only boat available, sailed for Capharnaum, which was on the western shore. Jesus caught up with them some time later by walking on the water. The multitude, thinking he still must be with them, stayed overnight where the miracle had been performed. The next morning they discovered Jesus was nowhere to be found and, when other boats put in near them, they embarked for Capharnaum, where they found Jesus and asked him when (but not how) he had made his way there, apparently thinking he had set off on foot before dawn for the long walk around the lake. He did not answer directly, but told them to “work to earn food which affords, continually, eternal life” (Jn 6:27). He had provided them their fill of natural bread; now he began to speak of supernatural bread.

With verse 30 begins a colloquy that took place in the synagogue at Capharnaum. The Jews asked him what sign he could perform, and, as a challenge, they noted that “our fathers had manna to eat in the desert” (Jn 6:31). Could Jesus top that? He told them the real bread from heaven comes from the Father. “Give us this bread”, they insisted. “But Jesus told them, It

is I who am the bread of life” (Jn 6:34-35). He was getting more explicit, and the Jews started to complain, but still understood him to be speaking metaphorically. Jesus repeated what he said before, then summarized: “I myself am the bread that has come down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever. And now, what is this bread that I am to give? It is my flesh, given for the life of the world” (Jn 6:51-52). Then the Jews asked, incredulously, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” (Jn 6:53).

Hugh Pope, in commenting on this chapter, remarked that at last “they had understood Him literally and were stupefied; but because they had understood Him correctly, He repeats His words with extraordinary emphasis, so much so that only now does He introduce the statement about drinking His blood”:¹ “You can have no life in yourselves, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood. The man who eats my flesh and drinks my blood enjoys eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. My flesh is real food, my blood is real drink. He who eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, lives continually in me, and I in him” (Jn 6:54-57).

There was no attempt to soften what was said, no attempt to correct “misunderstandings”, for there were none. His listeners understood him quite well. No one any longer thought he was speaking metaphorically, if they had, why no correction? On other occasions, whenever there was confusion, Christ explained what he meant. Here, where any misunderstanding would be catastrophic, there was no effort to correct. Instead, he repeated what he had said.

“There were many of his disciples who said, when they heard it, This is strange talk, who can be expected to listen to it?” (Jn 6:61). These were his *disciples*, people who already were used to his remarkable ways. He warned them not to think carnally, but spiritually: “Only the spirit gives life; the flesh is of no avail; and the words I have been speaking to you are spirit, and life” (Jn 6:64). But he knew some did not believe, including the one who was to betray him. (It is here, in the rejection of the Eucharist, that Judas fell away.) “After this, many of his disciples went back to their own ways, and walked no more in his company” (Jn 6:67).

This is the only record we have of any of Christ’s followers forsaking him for doctrinal reasons. If they merely had misunderstood him, if they foolishly had taken a metaphor in a literal sense, why did he not call them back and straighten things out? Both the Jews, who were suspicious of him, and his disciples, who had accepted everything up to this point, would have remained

had he told them he meant no more than a symbol.

But he did not correct these first protesters, these proto-Protestants. Twelve times he said he was the bread that came down from heaven; four times he said they would have “to eat my flesh and drink my blood”. John 6 was an extended promise of what would be instituted at the Last Supper—and it was a promise that could not be more explicit. Or so it would seem to a Catholic. But what do fundamentalists say?

Anti-Catholic writers identify two approaches to use when “disproving” the Real Presence. Jimmy Swaggart summarized them this way: “In all honesty we must repudiate this dogma on two counts: (1) It is opposed to Scripture. (2) It is contradicted by the evidence of the senses.”²

Fundamentalists concentrate on the first count, the argument from “the evidence of the senses” being weak since even a rudimentary understanding of transubstantiation makes one realize that the dogma, by definition, cannot be refuted through an appeal to sensory perception since there is not *supposed* to be any perceptible change to the eucharistic elements. Besides, an argument based on the senses must be an argument based on science or philosophy, and fundamentalists prefer to argue from the Bible.

In arguing from Scripture, every fundamentalist says Christ was speaking metaphorically in John 6 and during the Last Supper. Bart Brewer, head of Mission to Catholics International, says that “if I were to show someone a photograph of my son and say, ‘This is my son’, they [*sic*] would not take these words literally. The Scripture is written with such common language that it is obvious to any observant reader that the Lord’s Supper was intended primarily as a memorial and in no sense a literal sacrifice. In taking Biblical statements literally, we must be sure that doing so is consistent with the context and not in contradiction to other clear teaching.” Brewer also argues that “when Jesus said ‘this is my body’ or ‘blood’, he did not change the substance, but was explaining that he is the one ‘represented’ by the passover bread and wine. Jesus did not say *touto gignetai*, this has become or is turned into, but *touto esti*, which can only mean this represents or stands for.”³ Brewer’s Greek is deficient here. *Esti* is nothing else than the verb “is”. Its usual meaning is the literal, although it can be used figuratively, just as in English. If this crucial term is supposed to be read as “represents”, why was it not clearly put so in the Greek?

Brewer continues: “It is perfectly clear in the Gospels that Christ spoke in figurative terms, referring to Himself as ‘the door’, ‘the vine’, ‘the light’, ‘the

root', 'the rock', 'the bright and morning star', et cetera.”⁴ In this Brewer is seconded by Donald F. Maconaghie of the Conversion Center: “It is clear that our Lord used a sign or figure which the Council of Trent would have us cursed for believing when He said, ‘Except ye eat My flesh and drink My blood ye have no life in you’ John 6:53. Was our Lord transubstantiated into a literal door? He said, ‘I am the door’ John 10:9. Or into a vine? He said, ‘I am the true vine’ John 15:1. Notice we also read: ‘The ten horns are ten kings’ Daniel 7:24. ‘These great beasts which are four, are four kings’ Daniel 7:17. ‘The seven kine are seven years’ Genesis 41:26.”⁵

Leslie Rumble and Charles M. Carty answered this common charge years ago: “There is no logical parallel between the words ‘This is My body’ and ‘I am the vine’ or ‘I am the door.’ For the images of the vine and door can have, of their very nature, a symbolical sense. Christ is like a vine because all the sap of my spiritual life comes from Him. He is like a door since I go to heaven through Him. But a piece of bread is in no way like His flesh. Of its very nature it cannot symbolize the actual body of Christ. And he excludes that Himself by saying, ‘The bread that I will give is My flesh for the life of the world, and My flesh is meat indeed.’ That is, it is to be actually eaten, not merely commemorated in some symbolical way.”⁶

Not surprisingly, Swaggart agrees with Maconaghie and Brewer. He writes, “*This is my body . . . this is my blood*, are accepted literally in Catholic dogma. On the same basis we should accept without thinking that Jesus gives us literal living waters which will produce eternal life (John 4:14), or that Jesus is truly a door (John 10:7-9), that He is a lamb (John 1:29), or that He is a growing vine (John 15:5). If the Catholic hierarchy is to be consistent, they [*sic*] should foster adoration of doors, vines, and lambs. Certainly, these figures of speech are descriptive and colorful, but they are transparently figurative, just as are the terms ‘my body,’ and ‘my blood’. The New Testament Church and the Early Church understood and accepted this just as it was offered, *as a figure of speech*.”⁷

Is that so? Let us see what the Early Church thought.

Writing to the Smyrnaeans around 110 and referring to “those who hold heterodox opinions”, Ignatius of Antioch said, “They abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer, because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, flesh which suffered for our sins and which the Father, in his goodness, raised up again.”⁸

Forty years later, Justin Martyr wrote, “We call this food Eucharist, and no

one else is permitted to partake of it, except one who believes our teaching to be true and who has been washed in the washing which is for the remission of sins and for regeneration and is thereby living as Christ has enjoined. For not as common bread nor common drink do we receive these; but since Jesus Christ our Savior was made incarnate by the word of God and had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so too, as we have been taught, the food which has been made into the Eucharist by the Eucharistic prayer set down by him, and by the change of which our blood and flesh is nourished, is both the flesh and the blood of that incarnated Jesus.”⁹

Irenaeus of Lyons, in his masterwork, *Against Heresies*, written toward the close of the second century, said that Christ “has declared the cup, a part of creation, to be his own Blood, from which he causes our blood to flow; and the bread, a part of creation, he has established as his own Body, from which he gives increase to our bodies”. He asks, “If the Lord were from other than the Father, how could he rightly take bread, which is of the same creation as our own, and confess it to be his Body and affirm that the mixture in the cup is his Blood?”¹⁰

Origen, writing about 244, demonstrated that reverence is given to the smallest particle from the host. “I wish to admonish you with examples from your religion. You are accustomed to take part in the divine mysteries, so you know how, when you have received the Body of the Lord, you reverently exercise every care lest a particle of it fall and lest anything of the consecrated gift perish. You account yourselves guilty, and rightly do you so believe, if any of it be lost through negligence.”¹¹

Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, said this in his *Sermon to the Newly Baptized*, delivered in 373: “You shall see the Levites bringing loaves and a cup of wine and placing them on a table. So long as the prayers of supplication and entreaties have not been made, there is only bread and wine. But after the great and wonderful prayers have been completed, then the bread is become the Body, and the wine the Blood, of our Lord Jesus Christ.”¹²

As a final example, taken from dozens that could have been used, Cyril of Jerusalem, in his *Catechetical Lectures*, presented in the middle of the fourth century, told his listeners: “Do not, therefore, regard the Bread and Wine as simply that; for they are, according to the Master’s declaration, the Body and Blood of Christ. Even though the senses suggest to you the other, let faith make you firm. Do not judge in this matter by taste, but be fully assured by

faith, not doubting that you have been deemed worthy of the Body and Blood of Christ.”¹³

Whatever else might be said, it is certain that the early Church took John 6 and the accounts of the Last Supper literally. There is no record in the early centuries of any Christian doubting the Catholic interpretation. There exists no document in which the literal interpretation is opposed and only the metaphorical accepted. Brewer persists by saying, “The doctrine of transubstantiation does not date back to the Last Supper as is supposed. . . . The idea of a corporal presence was vaguely held by some, such as Ambrose, but it was not until 831 A.D. that Paschasius Radbertus, a Benedictine monk, published a treatise openly advocating the doctrine of transubstantiation. Even then, for almost another four hundred years, theological war was waged over this teaching by bishops and people alike until at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 A.D., it was officially defined and canonized as a dogma.”¹⁴

This is misleading. First of all, the Real Presence was not “vaguely” held by Ambrose. In his treatise *The Sacraments*, composed about 390, he wrote, “You may perhaps say: ‘My bread is ordinary.’ But that bread is bread before the words of the sacraments; where the consecration has entered in, the bread becomes the flesh of Christ. And let us add this: How can what is bread be the Body of Christ? By the consecration. The consecration takes place by certain words, but whose words? Those of the Lord Jesus. . . Therefore it is the word of Christ that confects the sacrament.”¹⁵ Nothing vague about that.

And what about Paschasius Radbertus? Was he the first to believe in transubstantiation? Radbertus was abbot of Old Corbie Monastery near Amiens. In 831 he composed a treatise that contained this ambiguous expression: “This is precisely the same flesh that was born of Mary, suffered on the Cross, and rose from the tomb.”¹⁶ He narrated some eucharistic miracles that gave the impression that Christ must be understood to be sensibly present in the sacrament, and another monk at his abbey, Ratramus, wrote a countertreatise noting that one must distinguish between the appearance of Christ in the Eucharist and the appearance of his body received from Mary, but *he* used language that might suggest Christ is only symbolically present in the Eucharist. Both Radbertus and Ratramus were orthodox; the trouble was that neither was precise in wording.

“The debate between these principals soon became a theological free-for-all”, said historian Newman Eberhardt.¹⁷ Others entered the fray, sometimes proposing rectifying language that was even more confusing than what

Radbertus and Ratramus wrote. The dispute ended by 860, with no one denying the Real Presence. What should be noted is that, despite various attempts to phrase the doctrine of the Real Presence accurately, there was no cry from anyone that this was a new doctrine. It was taken as a given. Those who inadvertently implied the Presence might be symbolic only were considered the innovators, not those who presumed it was Real.

In the theological world there was no further controversy on the issue until Berengarius of Tours, who died in 1088. He had studied the dispute that began with Radbertus and Ratramus and concluded that Christ was indeed present only symbolically. He repeatedly signed recantations and then, safe at home, reiterated his original position. This theological seesaw went on for decades, until he finally subscribed to an unambiguous formula. Church historians say he apparently died reconciled.¹⁸ Whether or not he did, he is the first Christian, so far as we can tell from the records, who denied the Real Presence. Paschasius Radbertus and Berengarius of Tours are remembered to history only because the one seemed to doubt the Real Presence and the other actually did. What this tells us is that the accepted belief was the opposite of what they were understood to hold.

Back to the words of the text. Keith Green identified in his *Catholic Chronicles* two biblical passages as the keys to the Catholic position. The first is John 6:55-56: “The man who eats my flesh and drinks my blood enjoys eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. My flesh is real food, my blood is real drink.” Green said that “with just a little study of the whole passage (verses 27-71), it is clear that Jesus was not talking about physical, but spiritual food and drink.” He argued that since Jesus says “he who comes to me will never be hungry” (Jn 6:35), “*to come to Him* is to ‘eat’!” Similarly, since Jesus tells us in the same verse that “he who has faith in me will never know thirst”, it follows that “*to believe on Him* is to ‘drink’!”¹⁹

Bart Brewer concurs. “These verses actually disprove the dogma of transubstantiation. The ones who took Jesus’ words literally were offended. That is why He clarified their misunderstanding by teaching them that what he said was to be understood spiritually (see verse 63). . . . Looking back to verse 47, it is obvious that ‘eating’ is equivalent to ‘believing.’ It is certain that what is meant by eating this flesh and drinking this blood is neither more nor less than ‘believing’ in Christ,”²⁰ In short, the command to eat Christ’s flesh and drink his blood must be taken metaphorically.

But there is a problem with that. As John A. O'Brien put it, "the phrase 'to eat the flesh and drink the blood', when used figuratively among the Jews, as among the Arabs of today, meant to inflict upon a person some serious injury, especially by calumny or by false accusation. To interpret the phrase figuratively then would be to make our Lord promise life everlasting to the culprit for slandering and hating Him, which would reduce the whole passage to utter nonsense."²¹ Christ would be saying, "He that reviles me has eternal life."

The scriptural argument is capped, by all fundamentalist writers, with an appeal to John 6:64: "Only the spirit gives life; the flesh is of no avail; and the words I have been speaking to you are spirit, and life." This is a verse to which fundamentalists always return, and it was, by the way, the first verse that Jimmy Swaggart threw at Catholic writer Barbara Nauer when they discussed the interpretation of this chapter. She was stunned by his use of the line, for the very good reason that in the context of the narration it can be seen not to relate to the question they were examining, which was: Is the Real Presence real? Swaggart thought this verse more than compensated for the apparent (and literal) meaning of the earlier part of John 6, He interpreted Nauer's pause as a silent acknowledgement of defeat, when in fact she was trying to understand what this non sequitur had to do with the issue at hand.²² Did Swaggart think that Christ, who had just commanded his disciples to eat his flesh, now said their doing so would be pointless? Is that what "the flesh is of no avail" means? "Eat my flesh, but you'll find it's a waste of time"—is that how he was to be understood? And were the disciples to understand the line "the words I have been speaking to you are spirit, and life" as nothing but a circumlocution, and a fairly clumsy one at that, for "symbolic"? No one can come up with interpretations like these unless he first holds to the fundamentalist position and thinks it necessary to find some rationale, no matter how tortuous, for discarding the Catholic interpretation.

In John 6:64 the word "flesh" is not used in the same sense as in John 6:53-59. It is being used more in the Pauline sense, in which it is contrasted with "spirit". The contrast is between unaided nature and nature elevated by grace. Compare John 3:6: "What is born by natural birth is a thing of nature, what is born by spiritual birth is a thing of spirit." Christ detects in some of his listeners an unsupernatural attitude that looks for earthly rewards and that turns away from his teaching on the Eucharist. When he says "the flesh is of no avail", he does not mean "my flesh"—that would contradict his

immediately prior remarks. He means instead carnal understanding, as distinguished from spiritual.

Return to Keith Green. He examined John 6:55-56, the first of the passages he identified as key, and then turned to the second, Matthew 26:26, 28: “This is my body . . . this is my blood.” He noted that

Catholics base their whole religious system on their interpretation of these two verses. They adamantly teach that right here, Jesus is pronouncing the first priestly blessing that mysteriously changes the bread and wine into his body and blood. The absolute folly of such a conclusion is proved by this one observation: *He was literally still there* before, during, and after they had partaken of the bread and cup! He had not changed into some liquid and bread—His flesh was still on His bones, and His blood was still in His veins. He had not vanished away to reappear in the form of a piece of bread or a cup of wine!²³

So here we have the diabolically clever Catholic Church telling us the transformation was real, yet Jesus was still at the table. Catholic exegetes through the centuries missed the fact that he was still present, that he did not disappear in a puff of smoke and end up on the platter and in the cup. How stupid Catholics have been, to miss the obvious! (Perhaps this just shows that *none* of them ever read beyond John 6:28; if any Catholic had, he could have blown the whistle, and the Church would not have made such a fool of itself.) This is the loose thinking fundamentalists end up with if they conclude, as they do, that the answer to the Catholic position is elementary because the Catholic position is so clearly erroneous.

The reply to Green is simple: Christ was present at the Last Supper in two ways. He was present at the table in a natural way, as were the apostles, and he was present in the eucharistic elements in a sacramental way, which is precisely the way he is present in them today, in Catholic churches throughout the world. That Christ can be present in two ways simultaneously is indeed a mystery (a mystery being a religious truth that cannot be comprehended fully by reason), but it is not an impossibility. Something does not become impossible simply because we cannot understand it. After all, God is present everywhere—all Christians acknowledge that—and that is as much a mystery as Christ’s presence in the Eucharist. Are we to deny God’s omnipresence because we cannot conceive how he pulls it off? If Christ, who was on earth in a natural body and now reigns in heaven in a glorified body, can make the world out of nothing, certainly he can make bread and wine into his own Body and Blood. That should not be hard to accept, no matter how hard it might be to fathom. There is no good reason to limit God’s acts to the

extent of our understanding.

The fundamentalists' problem is that theirs is a religion almost entirely lacking in the mysterious. More precisely, they readily acknowledge only those mysteries that are purely spiritual, such as the Trinity. They know the doctrine of the Trinity has been revealed, that something about the Trinity can be known, that certain deductions can be drawn from what is known; and they realize the essence of the Trinity lies beyond human comprehension, and they are happy to leave it at that. When it comes to mysteries that involve the mixing of spirit and matter, a kind of Docetism shows.

For fundamentalists the sacraments are out because they necessitate a spiritual reality, grace, being conveyed by means of matter. This seems a violation of the divine plan. Matter is not to be used, but overcome or avoided, and in this lies the unease with which they view the Incarnation. One suspects that, had they been asked by the Creator their opinion of how to effect mankind's salvation, they would have advised him to adopt an approach that would have appealed to Mary Baker Eddy. How much cleaner things would be if spirit never dirtied itself with matter! But God, quite literally, loves matter, and he loves it so much that he comes to us under the appearance of bread and wine. There is no contradiction in Christ being both physically and sacramentally present.

The verses fundamentalists have the hardest time with are 1 Corinthians 11:26-30: "So it is the Lord's death that you are heralding, whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, until he comes. And therefore, if anyone eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily, he will be held to account for the Lord's body and blood. [Douay-Rheims translation: ". . . shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord".] A man must examine himself first, and then eat of that bread and drink of that cup; he is eating and drinking damnation to himself if he eats and drinks unworthily, not recognizing the Lord's body for what it is." And what should it be recognized as? A mere metaphor? Then how can receiving unworthily be equated with being "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord"?

"Plain and simple reason", observed Nicholas Cardinal Wiseman more than a century ago in his *Lectures on the Real Presence*, "seems to tell us that the presence of Christ's body is necessary for an offense committed against it. A man cannot be 'guilty of majesty' unless the majesty exists in the object against which his crime is committed. In like manner, an offender against the Blessed Eucharist cannot be described as guilty of Christ's Body and Blood,

if these be not present in the Sacrament.”²⁴

“How could a person be guilty, if he had merely eaten a little bread and drunk a little wine, as a picture or representation or reminder of the Last Supper?” asked Rumble and Carty more recently. “No one is guilty of homicide if he merely does violence to the picture or statue of a man without touching the man in person. St. Paul’s words are meaningless without the dogma of the Real Presence.”²⁵ They may indeed then be meaningless, but fundamentalists would rather live with a meaningless Real Absence than a meaning-full Real Presence.

Chapter 20

The Mass

There is no mistaking it. Fundamentalists do not like the Mass, and they like it even less than they otherwise might because they misunderstand what it is. Jimmy Swaggart says, “The Roman Catholic church teaches that the Holy Mass is an expiatory (sin removing) sacrifice, in which the Son of God is actually sacrificed anew on the cross.”¹ Loraine Boettner calls the Mass a “jumble of medieval superstition”.² Keith Green called the Mass blasphemous because there can be no continuing offering for sin, Christ having died “once for all”.³ One comfortably may assume these men never read an official Catholic explanation of the Mass—or, if they did, that they did not understand it. Each could have turned for help to Vatican II, which put the Catholic position succinctly:

At the Last Supper, on the night He was betrayed, our Savior instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of His Body and Blood. He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the centuries until He should come again, and so to entrust to His beloved spouse, the Church, a memorial of His death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us.⁴

One does not need to read the documents of Vatican II to know Catholics say the Mass was instituted at the Last Supper. Any modestly informed Catholic can set an inquirer right on this and direct him to the biblical accounts of the final night Jesus was with his disciples. Anyone turning to the text would find these words: “Then he took bread, and blessed and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, This is my body, given for you; do this for a commemoration of me” (Lk 22:19). The Greek here and in the parallel Gospel passages (Mt 26:26; Mk 14:22) reads: *Touto estin to soma mou*. It is given slightly differently by Paul: *Touto mou estin to soma* (1 Cor 11:24). They all translate as “This is my body.” The verb *estin* is the equivalent of the English “is” and can mean “is really” or “is figuratively”. The usual meaning of *estin* is the former, just as, in English, the verb is usually taken in the real or literal sense.

Fundamentalists, of course, insist Christ, in saying, “This is my body”, spoke only a trope. This interpretation is precluded by Paul’s discussion of the Eucharist in 1 Corinthians 23-24 and by the whole tenor of John 6, the chapter where the Eucharist is promised. The Greek word for “body” in John 6 is *sarx*, which can only mean physical flesh, and the word for “eat” translates as “gnaws” or “chews”. This is not the language of metaphor.

The literal meaning cannot be avoided except through violence to the text—and through the rejection of the universal understanding of the early Christian centuries. The writings of Paul and John reflect belief in a Presence that is Real. There is no basis for forcing anything else out of the lines, and no writer tried to do so until the early Middle Ages. In short, Christ did not institute a Figurative Presence.

Sometimes fundamentalists say the use of the word “is” can be explained by the fact that Aramaic, the language spoken by Christ, had no word for “represents”. Jesus just had to do the best he could with a restricted vocabulary. Those who make this claim are behind the times, even for fundamentalists, most of whom now acknowledge that such an argument is feeble since, as Cardinal Wiseman showed a century ago, Aramaic has about three dozen words that can mean “represents”,⁵ so Christ would have had no difficulty at all in giving an unmistakable equivalent of “this represents my body.”

There have been attempts to get around the plain sense of the passage by wishing the words away. James Moffatt produced his second translation of the New Testament in 1913; it gives Matthew 26:26 and parallel passages this way: “Take and eat this, it means my body.” With this Moffatt ceased to be a translator and became an interpreter. Present-day fundamentalists do not rely on his version of the New Testament, generally preferring the Authorized Version instead, but Moffatt’s lapse from scholarly proprieties (what Arnold Lunn called “a glaring example of the subordination of scholarship to sectarian prejudice”)⁶ is indicative of the problems the accounts of the Last Supper cause people who refuse to take the words at face value.

As if the Catholic claim about the reality of the Real Presence were not bad enough, the Church insists that the Mass is the continuation and re-presentation of the sacrifice of Calvary. It is *not* a re-Crucifixion of Christ. He does not suffer and die again. On the other hand, it is more than just a memorial service.

John A. O’Brien says:

The manner in which the sacrifices are offered is alone different: on the Cross Christ really shed His blood and was really slain; in the Mass, however, there is no real shedding of blood, no real death; but the separate consecration of the bread and of the wine symbolizes the separation of the body and blood of Christ and thus symbolizes His death upon the Cross. The Mass is the renewal and perpetuation of the sacrifice of the Cross in the sense that it offers anew to God the Victim of Calvary and thus commemorates the sacrifice of the Cross, reenacts it symbolically and mystically, and applies the fruits of Christ's death upon the Cross to individual human souls. All the efficacy of the Mass is derived, therefore, from the sacrifice of Calvary.⁷

Keith Green would not have bought such an explanation. The second of Green's *Catholic Chronicles* is called *The Sacrifice of the Mass*. The subtitle is *Jesus Dies Again*, which aptly summarizes Green's position. Though Green now presumably knows better, having had a chance to obtain the proper interpretation of the Bible from the Author himself, people who rely on his writings apparently do not, so let us take a look at what he thought while here below.

His tract asks:

Have you ever wondered why in every Catholic church they still have Jesus up on the cross? Every crucifix with Jesus portrayed as nailed to it tells the whole Catholic story—Jesus is still dying for the sins of the world! But that's a lie! We need only look to the Scriptures to see the truth. The Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of the 'once for all' sacrifice of Christ on the cross, not a daily sacrifice on altars. The Bible repeatedly affirms in the clearest and most positive terms that Christ's sacrifice on Calvary was complete in that one offering. And that it was never to be repeated is set forth explicitly in Hebrews, chapters 7, 9, and 10.

Green then quotes Hebrews 7:27; 9:12; 9:25-28; and 10:10-14. (The Catholic reader should review these passages; Hebrews 9:28, for instance, reads: "Christ was offered once for all, to drain the cup of the world's sins.") Green notes that "throughout these verses occurs the statement 'once for all' which shows how perfect, complete, and final Jesus' sacrifice was! . . . Any pretense of a continuous offering for sin is worse than vain, it is blasphemy and true fulfillment of the Scripture, 'Seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame' " (Heb 6:6). Green does not mention the context in which Hebrews 6:6 is placed. It has nothing directly to do with the Mass. Instead, the first verses of the chapter deal with those who fall away from the Faith after baptism. Forgiveness of their sins cannot come through a second baptism, since there is only one baptism established by Christ. What do they want? the sacred writer asks. Do they want a new baptism to be given through a second Crucifixion? That is the only way it could happen. "Would they crucify the Son of God a second time, hold him

up to mockery a second time, for their own ends?”

This verse simply does not say what Green thought it did. Nor do the others. The Catholic Church specifically says Christ does not die again—his death is indeed once for all—but that does not contradict the doctrine of the Mass. It would be something else if the Church were to claim he *does* die again, but it does not make that claim. A re-presenting of the original sacrifice does not necessitate a new Crucifixion.

Keith Green has not been the only fundamentalist writer, of course, to disapprove of the Mass. “It must not be supposed for a minute”, warns Loraine Boettner in *Roman Catholicism*, “that modern Roman Catholics do not literally believe this jumble of medieval superstition. They have been taught it from infancy, and they do believe it. It is the very sternest doctrine of their church. It is one of the chief doctrines, if indeed it is not the chief doctrine, upon which their church rests.”⁸ Boettner’s argument is summarized in one paragraph. It is worth quoting at length. He says:

This doctrine of the mass, of course, is based on the assumption that the words of Christ, “This is my body” and “This is my blood” (Matt. 26:26-28), must be taken literally. The accounts of the institution of the Lord’s Supper, both in the Gospels and in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, make it perfectly clear that He spoke in figurative terms. Jesus said, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood” (Luke 22:20). And Paul quotes Jesus as saying: “This is the new covenant in my blood. . . . For as oft as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord’s death till he come” (1 Cor 11:25-26). In these words He used a double figure of speech. The cup is put for the wine, and the wine is called the new covenant. The cup was not literally the new covenant, although it is declared to be so as definitely as the bread is declared to be His body. They did not literally drink the cup, nor did they literally drink the new covenant. How ridiculous to say that they did! Nor was the bread literally His body, or the wine His blood. After giving the wine to the disciples Jesus said: “I shall not drink from henceforth of the fruit of the vine, until the Kingdom of God shall come” (Luke 22:18). So the wine, even as He gave it to them, and after he had given it to them, remained “the fruit of the vine”!⁹

Boettner continues by giving a cleverly incomplete quotation. He writes, “Paul too says that the bread remains bread: ‘Wherefore whosoever shall eat the bread and drink the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner. . . . But let each man prove himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup’ ” (1 Cor 11:27-28).¹⁰ The part of verse 27 represented by the ellipsis is crucial. It reads: “shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord”. Why does Boettner omit this? Because to be guilty of someone’s body and blood is to revile him, and one can hardly revile baked flour or fermented grape juice. This omitted line makes no sense at all unless it means a profanation of the

sacrament is something serious, and it clearly implies the bread and wine become Christ himself.

Boettner is not through. He has to mimic the early pagan opponents to Christianity by saying that “another and more important proof that the bread and wine are not changed into the literal and actual flesh and blood of Christ is this: the literal interpretation makes the sacrament a form of *cannibalism*. For that is precisely what cannibalism is—the eating of human flesh. Rome attempts to deny this, but without much logic.”¹¹ Peter Stravinskias turns this charge on its head and uses it to make an important observation. Allegations of cannibalism actually backfire on fundamentalists because, in bringing the topic up today, they encourage Catholics to note that it was brought up centuries ago. Stravinskias notes that “both Tertullian and Minucius Felix. . . give considerable attention in their second-century writings to the charge of cannibalism being leveled against the Church. A belief in the Real Presence thus clearly existed in the Early Church, for no ‘simple memorial supper’ would have evoked such specific and violent charges from the general pagan population.”¹²

Leslie Rumble and Charles M. Carty also addressed the cannibalism claim.

When Christ promised that He would give His very flesh to eat, the Jews protested because they imagined a natural and cannibalistic eating of Christ’s body. Christ refuted this notion of the manner in which His flesh was to be received by saying that He would ascend into heaven, not leaving His body in its human form upon earth. But He did not say that they were not to eat His actual body. He would thus contradict Himself, for a little earlier He had said, “My flesh is meat indeed and My blood is drink indeed” John 6:56. He meant, therefore, “You will not be asked to eat My flesh in the horrible and natural way you think, for My body as you see it with your eyes will be gone from this earth. Yet I shall leave my flesh and blood in another and supernatural way which your natural and carnal minds cannot understand. The carnal or fleshly judgment profits nothing. I ask you, therefore, to have faith in Me. It is the spirit of faith which will enable you to believe, not your natural judgment.”¹³

Another fundamentalist dissatisfied with the Mass is Ralph Woodrow. He presents his view in *Babylon Mystery Religion* by giving in full a poem he acknowledges to be crude. The author is listed as anonymous, and with good reason. The poem is called “A Roman Miracle”, and in forty lines it tells the story of a Protestant woman who married a Catholic. One day her husband brought his priest to dinner in order to effect her conversion. After the priest gave his counsel, they all agreed to meet again, and he promised to confect the sacrament in her presence if she would prepare the bread. He returned, did as he said, and prepared to eat. At the last moment she warned him that

“half an ounce of arsenic was mixed right in the batter, / But since you have its nature changed, it cannot really matter.” The priest, of course, ran away, eating nothing, and the contrite husband turned to his wife, saying: “To gulp such mummery and tripe, I’m not for sure, quite able; / I’ll go with you and we’ll renounce this Roman Catholic fable.”¹⁴

The literary worth of the poem is as modest as Woodrow’s understanding of transubstantiation. On Catholic principles, the priest was quite right, of course, to refuse to eat, for the simple reason that only the bread, not the poison, could be transubstantiated. Anything mixed with the bread would have remained unaltered (assuming the mixture would not have been unconfectable matter in the first place), and the bread would have retained the appearance and properties of bread. The arsenic would have remained poison. Transubstantiation would not have made the arsenic disappear, but this is something Woodrow seems not to realize. He just wants to poke fun at Catholics who “play” with bread and wine, but a review of Genesis might give him pause.

The Old Testament predicted that Christ would offer a true sacrifice to God in bread and wine—that he would use those elements. Melchisedech, the king of Salem and a priest, offered sacrifice under the form of bread and wine (Gen 14:18). Psalm no predicted Christ would be a priest “according to the order of Melchisedech”, that is, offering a sacrifice in bread and wine. We must, then, look for some sacrifice other than Calvary, since it was not under the form of bread and wine. The Mass fits the bill.

Joseph Zacchello, revealer of *Secrets of Romanism*, demurs: “Melchisedech brought bread and wine to refresh Abraham and his followers, not to sacrifice. The Roman version is a mistranslation. It translates ‘And he was a priest’, as follows: ‘For he was a priest’, in order to make it appear that he brought forth bread and wine in his official capacity as a priest to offer sacrifice with them.”¹⁵ Zacchello grasps for straws. The conjunction “and” in Greek often has the force of “for”, so here “and he was a priest” means the same as “for he was a priest”. What is more, “according to the order of Melchisedech” means “in the manner of Melchisedech” (“order” not referring, of course, to the modern notion of a religious order, there being no such thing in Old Testament days). The only “manner” shown by Melchisedech was the use of bread and wine. A priest sacrifices the items offered—that is the main task of all priests, in all cultures, at all times—so the bread and wine must have been what Melchisedech sacrificed. He did not

bring these elements along just because he thought it might be time for Abraham's lunch.

Fundamentalists sometimes admit Christ followed the example of Melchisedech at the Last Supper, but claim it was a rite that was not to be continued. They undermine their opposition to the Mass in saying this, since such an admission shows, at least, that the Last Supper was truly sacrificial. The key, though, is that they overlook that Christ said, "Do this for a commemoration of me" (Lk 22:19). Clearly, he was not talking about a one-time thing.

It is this command that makes fundamentalists uncomfortable. They think its Catholic interpretation minimizes the salvific work of Christ. Not so. "If all people were saved in that one momentous occasion," asks Stravinskis, "why does the Church continue to offer the sacrifice of the Mass? Because the salvation promised and earned is conditional; because it is contingent upon our acceptance of Jesus, our desire to be saved, and our living of a lifestyle which demonstrates an understanding of what life in Christ means. Since we were not present, we need to be reminded of what God has done for us. Our remembrance and ritual re-enactment of the event make it happen again—for us."¹⁶

One should keep in mind that, after foretelling the rejection of the Jewish priesthood, the prophet Malachi predicted a new sacrifice would be offered in every place. "From the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles; and in every place there is a sacrifice and there is offered to my name a clean oblation" (Malachi 1:10-11). Note that he speaks of one sacrifice, not many sacrifices, but one that is offered everywhere. The sacrifice of Calvary took place in one place only. We must look for a sacrifice apart from Calvary, one that is given under the form of bread and wine. Only the Mass meets the requirements.

As might be expected, fundamentalists put little stock in claims about the antiquity of the sacrificial aspects of the Mass, even if they think the Mass, in the form of a mere commemorative meal, commenced with the Last Supper. Many say the Mass as a sacrifice was not taught until the Middle Ages, alleging Innocent III was the first Pope to teach the doctrine. He merely insisted on a doctrine that had been held from the first but was being publicly doubted in his time. He formalized, but did not invent, the notion that the Mass is a sacrifice. Jimmy Swaggart, for one, goes further back than do most fundamentalists, claiming, "By the third century the idea of sacrifice had

begun to intrude.”¹⁷ Still other fundamentalists say Cyprian of Carthage was the first to mention a sacrifice.¹⁸ Irenaeus, writing *Against Heresies* in the second century, was ahead of Cyprian when he wrote of the sacrificial nature of the Mass,¹⁹ and Clement of Rome in his turn was ahead of Irenaeus when he wrote about those “from the episcopate who blamelessly and holily have offered its Sacrifices”.²⁰ It simply is not possible to get closer to New Testament times than this because Clement was writing *during* New Testament times. After all, at least one apostle, John, was still alive.

Fundamentalists are particularly upset about the Catholic notion that the sacrifice on Calvary is somehow continued through the centuries by the Mass. To them it seems Catholics are trying to have it both ways. The Church on the one hand says that Calvary is “perpetuated”, which seems to mean the same act of killing, the same letting of blood, is repeated again and again. This violates the “once for all” idea, fundamentalists claim. On the other hand, what Catholics call a sacrifice seems in fact to have no relation to biblical sacrifices since it does not look the same; after all, no splotches of blood are to be found on Catholic altars. “We must, of course, take strong exception to such pretended sacrifice”, Boettner instructs.

We cannot regard it as anything other than a deception, a mockery, and an abomination before God. The so-called sacrifice of the mass certainly is not identical with that on Calvary, regardless of what the priests may say. There is in the mass no real Christ, no suffering, and no bleeding. And a bloodless sacrifice is ineffectual. The writer of the book of Hebrews says that “apart from shedding of blood there is no remission” of sin (9:22); and John says, “The blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). Since admittedly there is no blood in the mass, it simply cannot be a sacrifice for sin.²¹

Boettner misreads chapter 9 of Hebrews, which begins with an examination of the Old Covenant. Moses is described as taking the blood of calves and goats and using it in the purification of the tabernacle (Heb 9:19-21; see Ex 24:6-8 for the origins of this). “And if such purification was needed for what was but a representation of the heavenly world, the heavenly world itself will need sacrifices more availing still. The sanctuary into which Jesus has entered is not one made by human hands, is not some adumbration of the truth; he has entered heaven itself, where he now appears in God’s sight on our behalf. Nor does he make a repeated offering of himself, as the high priest, when he enters the sanctuary, makes a yearly offering of the blood that is not his own” (Heb 9:23-25). So it was under the Old Law that a repeated blood sacrifice

was necessary for the remission of sins. Under the Christian dispensation, blood (Christ's) is shed only once, but it is continually offered to the Father.

How can that be? ask fundamentalists. They have to keep in mind that "what Jesus Christ was yesterday, and is today, he remains for ever" (Heb 13:8). What Jesus did in the past is present to God now, and God can make the sacrifice of Calvary present to us at Mass. "So it is the Lord's death you are heralding, whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, until he comes" (1 Cor 11:26).

In the final analysis, what makes the Mass literally unbelievable for fundamentalists is that they cannot conceive of a single act that is perpetuated through time. For them, what happened on Calvary happened there alone and remains in the dead past. They see Catholic priests conducting a sacrifice today and conclude that today's sacrifice must be distinct from Calvary's. If it really is a sacrifice, it is an attempt to replay Calvary in the most literal way—which, they know, is quite impossible. Christ cannot be killed again. So, for fundamentalists, what priests do at the altar really reduces to a show. Priests may think they are re-presenting the same sacrifice, but fundamentalists know they are only playacting.

It is fundamentalists' sense of the mysterious, their sense of the supernatural, that is undeveloped. Ask them about the nature of the afterlife. One will receive no enlightening answer, maybe no answer at all. It is as if they have hardly thought about the subject. Just what is the spiritual life like, anyway? It hardly does any good to say people will be happy in heaven. Some people are happy in the Bronx, but heaven must be something other than a superlative version of a New York borough. Having been instructed poorly in the supernatural as such, fundamentalists have not given it much thought, and they have trouble imagining that God is actually beyond time. They usually think of eternity as being nothing but endless years, a time line that disappears into the mists at each end, and they do not think of Calvary being in a perpetual Now.

They could imagine, say, several Jewish priests, all at about the same time, offering what could be termed a single sacrifice in the Temple. First one comes in, then another, and a few minutes later a third. They can see how three separate acts of offering could be considered a single sacrifice, if the three acts are nearly simultaneous. But thousands, millions of Masses through the centuries, each Mass like the others, but each quite different in appearance from Calvary itself? How can we say they are all the

representation of that original Sacrifice? If they cannot imagine the continuity being not so much in time, which is marked by days and hours, but outside of time, which is a single Now, they cannot help but think Catholics are trying to pull a fast one. It requires a determined refocusing of the mind to see things from the Catholic perspective, and this is not easy for fundamentalists to accomplish. It is far easier for Catholics to put themselves in fundamentalist shoes than for fundamentalists to step into ours. It is something like the problem that even Catholics have in getting a right appreciation of the Eucharist.

“You see, we are so materialistic”, noted Ronald Knox in *The Window in the Wall*,

our minds are so chained to the things of sense, that we imagine our Lord as instituting the Blessed Sacrament with bread and wine as the remote matter of it because bread and wine reminded him of that grace which he intended the Blessed Sacrament to bestow. But, if you come to think of it, it was just the other way about. When he created the worlds, he gave common bread and wine for our use in order that we might understand what the Blessed Sacrament was when it came to be instituted. He did not design the Sacred Host to be something like bread. He designed bread to be something like the Sacred Host.^{[22](#)}

One who has trouble grasping this insight will understand how difficult it is for fundamentalists to get a true appreciation of the Catholic doctrine of the Mass. They are so accustomed to reading the relevant biblical verses in a particular way that they cannot see there is far more than initially meets their eyes.

Chapter 21

Honoring the Saints

A diocesan priest, a man who always seemed to have the right words for the occasion, was celebrating a nuptial Mass. The bride had been raised a Catholic, but the groom had not. He was a recent convert. His entire family and almost all his friends at the wedding were non-Catholics. Since many of the bride's friends were not Catholics either, few people at the Mass understood what was going on. The priest therefore interspersed his liturgical duties with explanations.

It is traditional, at the conclusion of the ceremony, for the bride to take a bouquet to a side altar and lay it at the feet of a statue of the Virgin, at the same time praying that she might emulate Mary as a wife and mother. When the time came for that gesture, the priest commented that the placing of the flowers is done because “we Catholics worship Mary”. There was a collective sigh from the few Catholics in the church and a collective gasp from the non-Catholics, who apparently had their worst suspicions confirmed.

Was the priest right or wrong? Well, probably both. He was right in his understanding of the word “worship”, although he was using it in what is almost an archaic sense. He was surely wrong in using it in front of people who would misunderstand his meaning. After all, in common speech worship means adoration given to God alone. In this sense Catholics do not worship Mary or any of the other saints. But in an older usage the term worship means not just adoration of God but the honor given to anyone deserving honor.

Begin with the word itself. It comes from the Old English *weorthscipe*, which means the condition of being worthy of honor, respect, or dignity. To worship in the older, larger sense is to ascribe honor, worth, or excellence to someone, whether a sage, a magistrate, or God. But there are different kinds of worship as there are different kinds of honor. The highest honor, and thus the highest worship, is given to God alone, while the honor or worship given to living men or to saints in heaven is of a different sort. Idolatry thus does not simply mean giving worship (in the old sense) to living men or to saints;

it means giving them the kind reserved for God.

Nowadays there is a problem with using the word because in the popular mind it refers to God alone. For practical purposes it has come to mean nothing else than adoration. Although it was commonly used in the wider sense as recently as the nineteenth century (when, for instance, Orestes Brownson, perhaps the foremost Catholic intellectual America has produced, wrote *The Worship of Mary*), it is perhaps too confusing to use it that way now, as the example of the priest shows. It is no doubt wise to restrict its use to God and to use for saints and others terms such as honor and veneration.

Is this a distinction without a difference? It would be if the honor given to God were the same as the honor given to a saint. But it is not.

Consider how honor is given. We regularly give it to public officials. In the United States it is customary to address a judge as “Your Honor”. (It has been the British custom to address certain magistrates—here it comes—as “Your Worship”, but that is another can of worms.) In the marriage ceremony it used to be said that the wife would “love, honor, and obey” her husband. On Mount Sinai there was a command given to “honor thy father and thy mother” (Ex 20:12). Letters to legislators are addressed to “The Hon. So-and-So”. And just about anyone, living or dead, who bears an exalted rank is said to be worthy of honor, and that is particularly true of historical figures, as when children are, or at least used to be, instructed to honor the Founding Fathers.

So, if there can be nothing wrong with honoring the living, who still have an opportunity to ruin their lives through sin, or the uncanonized dead, about whose state of spiritual health we can only guess, certainly there can be no argument against giving honor to saints whose lives are done and who ended them in sanctity. If merit deserves to be honored wherever it is found, it surely should be honored among God’s special friends.

When we speak of honoring saints and particularly Mary, the greatest of the saints, what do we mean? How is this honor demonstrated? One way is through art. Our regard for the saints is shown through the employment of statues or paintings, just as we honor a deceased relative by keeping his photograph on the mantelpiece. It is said by fundamentalists, of course, that Catholics worship statues. Not only is this untrue, it is even untrue that Catholics honor statues. After all, a statue is nothing but a carved block of marble or a chunk of plaster, and no one gives honor to marble yet unquarried or plaster still in the mixing bowl.

The fact that someone kneels before a statue to pray does not mean that he is praying to the statue, just as the fact that one kneels with a Bible in his hands—as fundamentalists at times do—does not mean that he is worshipping the Bible. Statues or paintings or other artistic devices are used to recall to the mind the person or thing depicted. Just as it is easier to remember one's mother by looking at her photograph, so it is easier to recall the lives of the saints, and thus be edified by their examples, by looking at representations of them.

More important than honor shown to saints through artistic expression is the honor shown through personal communication, through prayer. Catholics honor saints, and particularly Mary, by praying to them and asking them to intercede with God on their behalf. This immediately brings up the question: Can saints in heaven hear us? After all, with extraordinarily rare exceptions, any communication with them seems to be at best a one-way street. True, there have been apparitions of Mary and some saints to a few individuals, but the Church has repeatedly said that no one is obliged to believe that these take place or to place any credence in what is said during them. Private revelations are binding only on the individuals to whom they are made; belief in them is not necessary for salvation. So, if we discount such instances, it seems that prayers go to the saints but that no unmistakable answers are received from them. So how do we know they hear us?

For the Catholic the answer can be almost deceptively simple: We know, because the Church tells us so. However satisfying such an answer may be to those who believe in the Magisterium and think there is a good reason to accept its teachings, it is hardly convincing to fundamentalists, who are unable to find any comfort in hagiographical accounts—or even in historical accounts of such things as Fatima.¹

The fundamentalists' chief problem in accepting that saints can hear prayers is that their notions of heaven and the afterlife are attenuated. For many of them the afterlife is hardly a life at all. They, like many Christians, draw a blank when they try to explain what heaven is like. Some can imagine nothing other than the stereotypic harps and choirs. Others say heaven is an impenetrable haze and that all we can know is that we will be happy there.

One thing that certainly can be said is that those in heaven are alive to God. "Have you never read in the book of Moses how God spoke to him at the burning bush, and said, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?' Yet it is of living men, not dead men, that he is the God"

(Mk 12:26-27). The saints in heaven are more alive now than we are. In the arms of God, they are more solicitous of us than when they were on earth. Just as Paul asked the other disciples to pray for him (Rom 15:30; Col 4:3; 1 Th 1:11), so now we can ask Paul and the other saints in heaven to intercede for us with God. We are not cut off from fellow Christians at death, but are, strangely enough and contrary to our unreflecting thoughts, brought closer. We continue in one communion, the communion of saints.

To fundamentalists the term communion of saints and its allied term, the Mystical Body of Christ, mean nothing. They have never heard of them, except for those who once were Catholics, and probably none of *them* ever understood the phrases. It is enough to remind fundamentalists of the image of the vine and its branches (Jn 15:1-8). They accept this as a metaphor of our relation to Christ, he being the vine, we the branches that live through him. They can see that if we are connected to Christ, we are connected to one another, but they tend to forget that those in heaven are not suddenly cut off from the vine. The saints remain as branches, which, if the symbolism means anything, means they remain related to us.

Paul develops Christ's teaching about the Mystical Body, about the vine and branches. He sees Christ as the head, the members of the Church as the body. The acts of any one member are profitable to all the members. "There was to be no want of unity in the body; all the different parts of it were to make each other's welfare their common care. If one part is suffering, all the rest suffer with it; if one part is treated with honor, all the rest find pleasure in it. And you are Christ's body, organs of it depending on each other" (1 Cor 12:25-27). He goes on, saying, "Each of us has one body, with many different parts, and not all these parts have the same function; just so we, though many in number, form one body in Christ, and each acts as the counterpart of another" (Rom 12:4-5).

A natural, even a necessary, inference from this teaching is intercessory prayer, which Paul requests for himself and all the saints: "Only, brethren, I entreat you by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Holy Spirit, to give me the help of your prayers to God on my behalf" (Rom 15:30); "offer your supplication for all the saints" (Eph 6:18). Here, of course, Paul is writing about the members of the Church Militant, but his teaching on the Mystical Body implies that prayers unite us with the Church Triumphant, too.

While the Bible does not explicitly refer to the veneration and invocation of saints, there is scriptural warrant for the practice. First there is the

reverence offered angels (Jos 5:14; Dan 8:17; Tob 12:16). This reverence is predicated on the angels' supernatural dignity, which comes from their union with God (Mt 18:10). Since the saints are also united with God (1 Cor 13:12; 1 John 3:2), it follows that they are also worthy of reverence.

The ancient Jews believed in the intercession of saints. Judas Maccabaeus saw in a vision "most worthy of credence" how two deceased men, the high priest Onias and the prophet Jeremiah, interceded with God for the Jews (2 Mace 15:11-16). And Jeremiah himself wrote that Moses and Samuel made intercession for the Jews, apparently meaning after their deaths (Jer 15:1). We learn that angels and saints place the prayers of the holy on earth at God's feet (Tob 12:12; Rev 5:8, 8:3), which is to say that they support the prayers with their intercessions. These verses also mean, apparently, that the angels and saints are the ones prayed to and that they then take these prayers to God.

John Henry Newman said that, in Revelation,

the sacred writer goes so far as to speak of "grace and peace" being sent to us, not only from the Almighty, but "from the seven Spirits that are before His throne", thus associating the Eternal with the ministers of His mercies; and this carries us on to the remarkable passage of St. Justin, one of the earliest Fathers, who, in his Apology, says, "To Him (God), and His Son who came from Him, and taught us these things, and the host of other good Angels who follow and resemble Him, and the Prophetic Spirit, we pay reverence and homage."

Newman then said that "one instance is given us, which testifies to the continuation of so high an office beyond this life. Lazarus, in the parable, is seen in Abraham's bosom. It is usual to pass over this striking passage with the remark that it is a Jewish expression; whereas, Jewish belief or not, it is recognised and sanctioned by our Lord Himself."² If Dives could pray to Lazarus (that must have been how he spoke to him) across the unbridgeable abyss, then why should we not be able to pray to saints across an abyss they have successfully crossed and we hope to cross?

But why ask the saints to pray to God on one's behalf? Why not pray to God directly? After all, ask fundamentalists, isn't Christ the one mediator (1 Tim 2:5), and do not the saints become mediators in violation of that if they pray for us? Orestes Brownson answered the first of these questions in a series of articles he wrote for *Ave Maria* magazine in 1865 and 1866. "But still it is asked", Brownson noted,

what need to pray the saints at all, and why not pray directly to God himself, since he is infinitely nearer to us, and more ready and able to help us than any saint is or can be? In reply, I answer that Catholics do pray directly to God, and perhaps even more than, they do who reject prayers to

the saints; and I might ask, in our turn, why pray even directly to God, since he knows all our wants better than we ourselves know them, knows what we are going to pray for before the prayer is formed in our own heart, and is infinitely more willing to help us than we are to ask his help? The same principle that justifies prayer to God justifies prayers to the saints to intercede for us.³

Brownson also answered the charge that saints cannot hear our prayers.

But it is alleged, even by persons who call themselves Christians, that however well disposed the saints might be to intercede for us, they cannot hear our invocations, and therefore our prayers to them are vain and even superstitious. If they cannot hear us, our prayers to them *are* unquestionably superstitious, and not to be tolerated. But wherefore can they not hear us? Are they not living men and women—even more living than when they tabernacled with us? . . . There can be no communion where there is no medium of communication. We who live have a medium of communication with those who have gone to their reward and therefore form one communion with them. This medium is Christ himself, who is the head of every man, and whose life is the life of all who are begotten anew by the Holy Ghost. . . . There is no more mystery in the way the saints hear our invocations than there is in the way we hear one another. Mystery there is, but it is the same mystery in both cases, and it would be absurd to maintain that we do not hear one another because we cannot explain how we do it. There being a medium of communication between us and the saints, and they and we forming only one communion, one body of our Lord, being members of him and members of one another, nothing can be more reasonable, more natural even, than that we should invoke their prayers, and that they should intercede for us. It is in accordance alike with the order of nature and the order of grace.⁴

In response to fundamentalists' other question, about Christ being the one mediator, consider what we do for one another now. We pray for others, and we ask others to pray for us. By doing so we indeed act as mediators since we pray to God on behalf of others, and our friends are mediators for us. (Attend a fundamentalist service and see how Brother This and Sister That ask the congregation to "pray over them"; fundamentalists' theories are often contradicted by their acts.) This prayer for one another does not violate Christ's role as the one mediator, because ours is a secondary mediatorship that is entirely dependent on his. Paul asked his friends to pray for him as he prayed for them, and today Christians do the same, but none of this violates the truth that without Christ our prayers to the Father would be ineffectual.

A common objection to prayer to the saints is stated by Loraine Boettner:

How, then, can a human being such as Mary hear the prayers of millions of Roman Catholics, in many different countries, praying in many different languages, all at the same time? Let any priest or layman try to converse with only three people at the same time and see how impossible that is for a human being. . . . The objections against prayers to Mary apply equally against prayers to the saints. For they too are only creatures, infinitely less than God, able to be at only one place at a time and to do only one thing at a time. How, then, can they listen to and answer

thousands upon thousands of petitions made simultaneously in many different lands and in many different languages? Many such petitions are expressed, not orally, but only mentally, silently. How can Mary and the saints, without being like God, be present everywhere and know the secrets of all hearts?⁵

Ex-priest Joseph Zacchello quotes at length from John Hunkley's *How I Became a Non-Catholic*. Hunkley took pencil and paper, estimated how many times a day Rosaries are recited around the world, timed how long it takes to say a Hail Mary, and determined that Mary would "have to listen to 46,296 petitions at one and the same time, simultaneously, every second of time from one end of the year to the other". But no one except God can listen to so many petitions at once, he claimed, which means either Mary cannot hear them, or Catholics think she is divine,⁶

If being in heaven were like being in the next room, then such objections would be valid. Someone in the next room would indeed suffer the restrictions posed by space and time. But the saints are not in the next room, and heaven has no space or time. In heaven everything happens in one great Present; there is neither past nor future in our sense of the terms. When God looks at his creation, he sees all of it at once, all that has been, all that now is, all that will be. It is by his sufferance we communicate with one another on earth, and he likewise lets us communicate with the saints in heaven—who, like God, are outside of space and time. To say that they do not have time to listen to many prayers at once is to commit a basic error—they do not have time at all, because they are beyond time. This does not imply that they therefore must be omniscient as is God, for it is only through God's willing it that they can communicate with others in heaven or with us.

Chapter 22

Marian Beliefs

The Marian doctrines are, for fundamentalists, among the most annoying of the doctrines people identify as peculiarly Catholic. Fundamentalists disapprove of any talk about Mary as the Mother of God, as the Mediatrix, as the Mother of the Church; they disbelieve in her Immaculate Conception, do not think she was assumed into heaven, and hold that she was not a lifelong virgin. For many fundamentalists, Catholicism is little more than a subordination of basic Christianity (C. S. Lewis' "mere Christianity") to a confusing skein of Marian beliefs; they see these beliefs as interfering with, even canceling, the proper attitude toward Christ. Let us examine the Marian doctrines fundamentalist writers most frequently complain about.

Immaculate Conception

Catholic exegetes, in discussing the Immaculate Conception, begin with the Annunciation. Gabriel greeted Mary by saying "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee" (Lk 1:28). This is the traditional rendering, based on the Vulgate. The phrase "full of grace" is a translation, by way of the Latin, of the Greek *kecharitomene*, but it is not a transliteration. In Greek, "full of grace" would be *pleres charitos*, which is used for Christ in John 1:14 and for Stephen in Acts 6:8, not *kecharitomene*.

Newer translations, based directly on the Greek, render Luke 1:28 as "Rejoice, you who enjoy God's favor! The Lord is with you" (New Jerusalem Bible) or "Rejoice, O highly favored daughter! The Lord is with you" (New American Bible). These translations are imperfect, since they give the impression that the favor bestowed on Mary was no different from that given other women in the Bible.¹ If she had been merely "highly favored", in the normal connotation of those words (and it is the normal connotation that many people will read here), her status would have been indistinguishable from that of Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist; or Sarah, the wife of Abraham; or Anna, the mother of Samuel—all of whom, by the way, were

long childless and were “highly favored” because God acceded to their pleas to bear children.

“*Charts* means favor, disinterested benevolence, coming from God”, explains Rene Laurentin. “Does this mean that *kecharitomene* means only the extrinsic favor of God? From two points of view it means much more.” Both theologically and philologically, he says, the word indicates “a transformation of the subject”. The sense is not just “to look upon with favor, but to transform by this favor or grace”.² *Kecharitomene*, then, signifies a plenitude of favor or grace.

The newer translations leave out something the Greek conveys, something the older translation conveys, which is that this grace (and the core of the word *kecharitomene* is *charts*, after all) is at once permanent and of a singular kind. The Greek indicates a perfection of grace. A perfection must be perfect not only intensively, but extensively. The grace Mary enjoyed must not only have been as “full” or strong or complete as possible at any given, time, but it must have extended over the whole of her life, from conception. That is, she must have been in a state of sanctifying grace from the first moment of her existence to have been called “full of grace” or to have been filled with divine favor in a singular way. This is just what the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception holds: that Mary, “in the first instant of her conception was, by a singular grace and privilege of Almighty God in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, preserved exempt from all stain of original sin”.³

(One should keep in mind what the Immaculate Conception is *not*. Some non-Catholics think the term refers to Christ’s conception in Mary’s womb without the intervention of a human father; the proper name for that is the Virgin Birth. Others think the Immaculate Conception means Mary herself was conceived “by the power of the Holy Spirit”, in the way Jesus was, but it does not. The Immaculate Conception means that Mary, whose conception was brought about the normal way, was conceived in the womb of her mother without the stain of original sin. The essence of original sin consists in the lack of sanctifying grace. Mary was preserved from this defect; from the first instant of her existence she was in the state of sanctifying grace.)

Fundamentalists’ chief reason for objecting to the Immaculate Conception and Mary’s consequent sinlessness—which is what her lifelong state of sanctifying grace implies—is that Mary was but a creature, and we are told that “all have sinned” (Rom 3:23). Besides, they say, Mary said her “spirit

rejoices in God my Savior” (Lk 1:47), and only a sinner needs a Savior. Since Mary was a sinner, she could not have been immaculately conceived.

Take the second citation first. The Church has a simple and sensible answer to this difficulty. It is this: Mary, too, required a Savior. Like all other descendants of Adam, by her nature she was subject to the necessity of contracting original sin. But by a special intervention of God, undertaken at the instant she was conceived, she was preserved from the stain of original sin and certain of its consequences. She was therefore redeemed by the grace of Christ, but in a special way, by anticipation. The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception thus does not contradict Luke 1:47.

What about Romans 3:23, “all have sinned”? Fundamentalists, as a rule, think it means more than that everyone is subject to original sin. They think it means everyone commits actual sins. They conclude it means Mary must have sinned during her life, and that certainly would speak against an Immaculate Conception. Is the fundamentalists’ analysis solid? Not really. Think about a child below the age of reason. By definition he cannot sin, since sinning requires the ability to reason and the ability to intend to sin. If the child dies before ever committing an actual sin, because he is not mature enough to know what he is doing, what act of his brings him under their interpretation of Romans 3:23? None, of course.

Paul’s comment to the Christians in Rome thus would seem to have one of two meanings. Despite the phrasing, it might be that it refers not to absolutely everyone, but just to the mass of mankind (which means young children and other special cases, such as Mary, would be excluded without having to be singled out). If not that, then it would mean that everyone, without exception, is subject to original sin, which is true for a young child, for the unborn, even for Mary—but she, although due to be subject to it, was preserved from its stain.

It took a positive act of God to keep her from coming under its effects the way we have. We had the stain of original sin removed through baptism, which brings sanctifying grace to the soul, thus making the soul spiritually alive and capable of enjoying heaven, and makes the recipient a member of the Church. We might say that Mary received a very special kind of “baptism” at her conception, but, because since she never contracted original sin, she enjoyed certain privileges we never can, such as entire avoidance of sin.

On occasion one will hear that the Immaculate Conception cannot be

squared with Mary's own description of herself: "He has looked graciously on the lowliness of his handmaid" (Lk 1:48). How could she be lowly if she were, as Catholics say, the highest creature, what the poet Wordsworth called "our tainted nature's solitary boast"?⁴ If she understood herself to be lowly, does that not mean she understood herself to have sinned?

The key is that sin is not the only motive for lowliness. Compared to God, any creature, no matter how perfect, is lowly, Mary included. Jesus, referring to his human nature, said, "Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart" (Mt 11:29). Certainly he was without sin, and if he could describe himself as lowly, there can be no argument against Mary describing herself the same way.

The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was officially defined by Pope Pius IX in 1854. When fundamentalists claim that the doctrine was "invented" at this time, they misunderstand both the history of dogmas and what prompts the Church to issue, from time to time, definitive pronouncements regarding faith or morals. They are under the impression that no dogma is believed until the Pope or an ecumenical council issues a formal statement about it.

Actually, dogmas are defined formally only when there is a controversy that needs to be cleared up or when the Magisterium thinks the faithful can be helped by particular emphasis being drawn to some already-existing belief. The definition of the Immaculate Conception was prompted by the latter motive; it did not come about because there were widespread doubts about the doctrine. Pius IX, who was highly devoted to the Virgin, hoped the definition would inspire others in their devotion to her.

The Assumption

As they reject the Immaculate Conception and Mary's perpetual virginity, so fundamentalists reject the dogma of the Assumption, but they do not worry about it much. What little thought they give to it concerns why Catholics think Mary did not die. That is not the Catholic position, of course, but fundamentalists think it is, and they are concerned about a privilege that finds no warrant in Scripture.

They note that Enoch "walked with God, and he was seen no more because God took him" (Gen 5:24). He was translated so as not to see death (Heb 11:5). Then there was Elijah, who was taken up into heaven in a fiery chariot

(2 Kings 2:1-13). The Bible says nothing about what happened to Mary, they note, and does it not seem there would be some mention of her never dying? After all, it would have been truly “remark-able”.

There is a certain sense in their argument, and if the doctrine of the Assumption were what they think it is, the argument would carry some weight. But it is beside the point because Catholic commentators, not to mention the Popes, have agreed that Mary died; that belief has long been expressed through the liturgy. (The Church has never formally defined whether she died or not, and the integrity of the doctrine of the Assumption would not be impaired if she did not die, but the almost universal consensus is that she did in fact die.) The Assumption is therefore simpler than fundamentalists fear, although still not acceptable to them. In 1950 Pope Pius XII, in an exercise of papal infallibility, defined that Mary, “after the completion of her earthly life”—note the silence regarding her death—“was assumed body and soul into the glory of Heaven”.⁵ In short, her body was not allowed to corrupt; it was not allowed to remain in a tomb.

(It is also necessary to keep in mind what the Assumption is *not*. Some people think Catholics believe Mary “ascended” into heaven. That is not correct. Christ, by his own power, ascended into heaven. Mary was assumed or taken up into heaven by God. She did not do it under her own power.)

True, no express scriptural proofs for the doctrine are available. The possibility of a bodily assumption before the Second Coming is not excluded by 1 Corinthians 15:23, and it is even suggested by Matthew 27:52-53: “and the graves were opened, and many bodies arose out of them, bodies of holy men gone to their rest: who, after his rising again, left their graves and went into the holy city, where they were seen by many”.

There is also what might be called the negative historical proof. As every fundamentalist knows, from the first Catholics gave homage to saints, including many about whom we now know nothing. Cities vied for the title of the last resting place of the most famous saints. Rome, for example, claims the tombs of Peter and Paul, Peter’s tomb being under the high altar of the Basilica that bears his name. Other cities claim the mortal remains of other saints, both famous and obscure. We know the bones of some saints were distributed to several cities, so more than one, for example, are able to claim the “head” of this or that saint, even if the “head” is only a small portion of the skull. With a few exceptions (such as Peter, who was only claimed by Rome, never, for example, by Antioch, where he worked before moving on to

Rome), the more famous or important the saint, the more cities wanted his relics.

We know that after the Crucifixion Mary was cared for by the apostle John (Jn 19:26-27). Early Christian writings say John went to live at Ephesus and that Mary accompanied him. There is some dispute about where she ended life; perhaps there, perhaps back at Jerusalem. Neither those cities nor any other claimed her remains, although there are claims about possessing her (temporary) tomb. Why did no city claim the bones of Mary? Apparently because there were no bones to claim and people knew it.

Remember, in the early Christian centuries relics of saints were jealously guarded, highly prized. The bones of those martyred in the Colosseum, for instance, were quickly gathered up and preserved; there are many accounts of this in the biographies of those who gave their lives for the Faith. Yet here was Mary, certainly the most privileged of all the saints, certainly the most saintly, but we have no record of her bodily remains being venerated anywhere.

Most arguments in favor of the Assumption, as developed over the centuries by the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, concern not so much scriptural references (there are few that speak even indirectly to the matter), but rather the fittingness of the privilege. The speculative grounds considered include Mary's freedom from sin, her Motherhood of God, her perpetual virginity, and—the key—her participation in the salvific work of Christ. It seems most fitting that she should attain the full fruit of the Redemption, which is the glorification of the soul and body.

Yet there is more than just fittingness. Pius XII said the Assumption is really a consequence of the Immaculate Conception. "These two singular privileges bestowed upon the Mother of God stand out in most splendid light at the beginning and the end of her earthly journey. For the greatest possible glorification of her virgin body is the complement, at once appropriate and marvelous, of the absolute innocence of her soul, which was free from all stain. . . [S]he shared in Christ's glorious triumph over sin and its sad consequences."⁶

"But", ask fundamentalists, "if Mary was immaculately conceived, and if death was a consequence of original sin, why did she die?" Although she was wholly innocent and never committed a sin, she died in order to be in union with Jesus. Keep in mind that he did not have to die to effect our redemption; he could have just willed it, and that would have been sufficient. But he

chose to die. Mary identified herself with his work, her whole life being a cooperation with God's plan of salvation, certainly from her saying, "Let it be done to me according to thy word" (Lk 1:38), but really from the very start of her life. She accepted death as Jesus accepted death, and she suffered (Lk 2:35) in union with his suffering. Just as she shared in his work, she shared in his glorification. She shared in his Resurrection by having her glorified body taken into heaven, the way the glorified bodies of all the saved will be taken into heaven on the Last Day.

Still, fundamentalists ask, where is the proof from Scripture? Strictly, there is none. It was the Catholic Church that was commissioned by Christ to teach all nations and to teach them infallibly. The mere fact that the Church teaches the doctrine of the Assumption as something definitely true is a guarantee that it *is* true. Here, of course, we get into an entirely separate matter, the question of *sola scriptura*, which is considered elsewhere. It is enough to say there is no problem with an infallible Church officially defining a doctrine that, although not in contradiction to Scripture, cannot be found on its face. After all, the Bible says nothing against the Assumption; silence is not the same as rejection, although, to be sure, silence is not the same as affirmation either. Silence is just—silence.

The Mother of God

Frank Sheed said that Louisa Cozens, "who earned her daily-bread scrubbing floors", "had as gifted a theological mind as I have met",⁷ although she had only a primary school education. In 1928 she spent many evenings, after work, at the apartment where Sheed and his wife, Maisie Ward, lived because it was the only quiet place she could write. There, without reference books, she composed *A Handbook of Heresies*, probably the best small-compass account of departures from the Faith. It covers everything from Ebionism to modernism.

Cozens had a knack for getting right to the pith. In her discussion of Nestorianism, named after the bishop of Constantinople who, around 429, declared that Mary was the Mother of Christ, but not the Mother of God, thereby denying the hypostatic union, Cozens noted that "Protestants, if asked to declare their belief in the Incarnation, nearly always define it in terms which prove their underlying Nestorianism. Even when they are willing to say that Jesus Christ is God, they shrink from the Catholic statement, that

God was born of Mary; that God shed his blood for us on Calvary; that God died. Today as in the fifth century, in London as at Ephesus, the honour of Mary is the safeguard, the outpost of the adoration of her son. To acknowledge the *Theotokos* ["God-bearer"] is to believe in God the Son made man."⁸

Little wonder, then, that fundamentalists, who are in so many ways archetypal Protestants, cringe when they hear Catholics refer to the Virgin as the Mother of God. How can God have a Mother, they ask, since that would imply she is older than God? The question is laughable for Catholics, but fundamentalists take it seriously. It is not the real reason, of course, that they disapprove of the idea of *Theotokos*. They do not say to themselves that they would call Mary the Mother of God if only this question of chronology could be answered to their satisfaction.

Their real objection is that the phrase "Mother of God" elevates Mary too much. Sure, they say, she was Christ's mother, Jesus' mother, and no doubt a good woman, but otherwise undistinguished. They perceive God as being so "wholly other" that there is a real, if unperceived, difficulty in their accepting the Incarnation in its fullest sense. It is easy for them to fall into Nestorius' position; he held that the union of the two natures in Christ was little more than a moral union of two distinct persons, the divine Son and the human Jesus. So very often, when fundamentalists discuss the matter privately and at length, they end up saying the same thing, all because of their effort to escape honoring Mary.

The answer to difficulties regarding Mary's status as the Mother of God can be explained only by noting the distinction between personhood and nature. Fundamentalists say Mary was the mother of Christ's human nature, not the mother of his divine nature, but with a little effort they can be brought to see that this is wrong. After all, was your mother the mother of your human nature? No, she was the mother of *you*. It is a *person* who is conceived and born, not a *nature*. What person was born of Mary? A divine Person only, not a human person—but a divine Person who took on a human nature. The one born of Mary "shall be called the son of God" (Lk 1:35), and "God sent his son, made of a woman" (Gal 4:4).

To say that Christ was a human person is to deny the hypostatic union. Most fundamentalists do not know that term—they are confused, too, about the distinction between person and nature—but they can perceive the contradiction inherent in their position if someone shows it to them. They can

see that if Mary was not the Mother of God, then she was the mother only of Christ as a human person. They can see that *if that* was the case, then Christ was two distinct persons, a human person and a divine Person. But this is something fundamentalists do not believe; they acknowledge one Person in two natures, even if they have trouble stating the belief as such.

So there is a logical, but not psychological, contradiction here. If thought through, they would see that their position on the *Theotokos* leads to an impossible conclusion, but they have not thought it through because fundamentalism's spirit is antitheological, antispeculative. It holds theorizing on religious matters to be an invitation to heterodoxy, a view that stems from its insistence that Christian truth is ultimately experienced, not known, that will is higher than intellect. This makes for endless difficulties when Catholics and fundamentalists sit down to talk, since the latter are suspicious of syllogisms. The difficulties can be overcome with patience and an awareness that there are often unmentioned presuppositions that have to be handled first if a discussion is to get anywhere.

Mary as Mediatrix

Fundamentalists think Catholics put Mary on a par with her Son. After all, what is the word mediatrix but the feminine of mediator? Do not Catholics go even further, calling Mary the Mediatrix of all graces? Does this not deny Christ's role as the one Mediator?

The contradiction here is illusory. As Thomas Aquinas said in reference to 2 Corinthians 5:19, "Christ alone is the perfect mediator of God and men, inasmuch as, by his death, he reconciled the human race to God. . . . However, nothing hinders certain others from being called mediators, in some respect, between God and man, forasmuch as they cooperate in uniting men to God, dispositively or ministerially."⁹ After all, we mediate for others when we pray to God on their behalf, which, of course, is something fundamentalists themselves do. This does not argue against Christ being the sole Mediator, because our modest efforts are entirely dependent on him. In a far more perfect way, Mary shares in his mediation. Her status as Mediatrix of all graces exists in a double sense.

First, she gave the world its Redeemer, the source of all graces, and in this sense she is the channel of all graces. She freely cooperated with God's plan (Lk 1:38: "Be it done to me according to thy word"), and, as St. Thomas

wrote, at the Annunciation, at the key moment for our race, she represented the whole of humanity.¹⁰ The Fathers of the Church contrast Mary's obedience, which was perfectly free, with Eve's disobedience.

Second, Mary is the Mediatrix of all graces because of her intercession for us in heaven. What this means is that no grace accrues to us without her intercession. We are not to suppose that we are obliged to ask for all graces through her or that her intercession is intrinsically necessary for the application of graces. Instead, through God's will, grace is not conferred on anyone without Mary's cooperation.

True, scriptural proofs for this are lacking. Theologians refer to a mystical interpretation of John 19:26 ("Woman behold thy son, son behold thy mother"), an interpretation that sees John as the representative of the human race, Mary thus becoming the spiritual mother. They note the doctrine is reasonable because it is fitting.

This is little consolation to fundamentalists, of course, who see little fitting about it and who put little stock in speculative theology and even less in mystical theology. As a practical matter, this kind of doctrine is one of the last accepted by someone approaching the Church, particularly someone coming to the Church from fundamentalism, and it is accepted, ultimately, on the authority of the Church rather than on the authority of clear scriptural references. Fundamentalists, always looking for a biblical citation, can see no reason to accept a belief in Mary as Mediatrix of all graces, but they can, if they take the effort, come to see that there is, at least, nothing in the doctrine that contradicts Christ's role as the one Mediator. His role as Mediator is not lessened because she has been allowed to assist him.

The Veneration of Mary

To fundamentalists, the veneration of Mary is nothing other than the worship of Mary, as shown by their use of the term Mariolatry. They really believe Catholics put Mary on the same level as God. Some of their complaints seem ridiculous to Catholics. The most common, perhaps, is that in the Rosary ten prayers are said to Mary for every one said to the Father.¹¹ The implication is usually left unspoken, but one is supposed to conclude, apparently, that Catholics prefer Mary ten to one over God. Looked at this way, the Rosary becomes a medieval Gallup poll.

Bill Jackson writes about Mary in his *Christian's Guide to Roman*

Catholicism. He explains that “the rise in devotion to her came when a backslidden church, having lost the reality of Christ, was presented with the pagan concept of a female deity and she was deemed able to mediate between them and a God Who was too far away”.¹² One of the problems with this argument is timing. Paganism effectively disappeared by the end of the sixth century, but devotion to Mary of a sort seen today was not common until the Middle Ages, by which time paganism was not even a distant memory.

Granted, there is a certain logic in claiming Catholicism adopted pagan ways when paganism was still vibrant. In fact, this is exactly what fundamentalists claim when they say Catholicism, as distinguished from Christianity, arose at the beginning of the fourth century, when Christianity was legalized in the Roman Empire. Most Romans were still pagans, they note, so it made sense for the Catholic authorities to curry favor with adherents of the majority religion. They do not realize their argument undercuts any claim that the Church appealed to paganism in promoting the veneration of the Virgin. There were no pagans left in the former Roman territory as the Middle Ages opened, so what could be gained by taking on a devotion designed to appeal to them?

One of the favorite tactics of fundamentalists, in disparaging the honors given to Mary, is to quote from some Marian devotional works. Chief among them is Alphonsus Liguori’s *The Glories of Mary*, which is still popular and still in print. Liguori’s book is a source of one-liners that, taken out of context (and his context is often a page or more, or even a whole chapter), seem to put Mary not just on a par with her Son, but above him. It is not easy dealing with a writer, even a saint, whose style is full of literary conceits and hyperbolic statements. *The Glories of Mary* is precisely the kind of book one should not press into the hands of a non-Catholic who has no appreciation of the Church’s position on Mary—not because it is wrong and not because it reveals “secrets” reserved for the initiated, but because it is not easy to understand.

It is a matter of sequence, a matter of the groundwork that needs to be done first. There is no question that Liguori is orthodox, of course, and that his writings are enlightening, but they are simply too much for a fundamentalist to absorb. In reading Liguori, all the fundamentalist’s fears seem confirmed, and that is only to be expected, since he has no appreciation of what the Catholic position on Mary really is and—what is just as bad—no appreciation of the style of religious writing that was popular in the eighteenth century,

when Liguori wrote. It is remarkably easy for a fundamentalist to be frightened away from the Church. He needs to be shown Catholicism slowly, much the way the Faith was revealed only in increments to the catechumens of the early centuries. The fundamentalist feels real revulsion at doctrines he understands poorly, such as the Marian doctrines, but he can be brought to understand and even to adhere to them if the proper foundation is laid.

Mary's Perpetual Virginity

“When Catholics call Mary the Virgin, they mean she remained a virgin throughout her life. When Protestants use the term, they mean she was a virgin only until the birth of Jesus; they believe that she and Joseph later had children, all those called “the brethren of the Lord”. What gives rise to the disagreement are biblical verses that use the terms “brethren”, “brother”, or “sister”.

These are representative verses; “While he was still speaking to the multitude, it chanced that his mother and his brethren were standing without, desiring speech with him” (Mt 12:46); “Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joseph and Judas and Simon? Do not his sisters live here near us?” (Mk 6:3); “For even his brethren were without faith in him” (Jn 7:5); “All these, with one mind, gave themselves up to prayer, together with Mary the mother of Jesus, and the rest of the women and his brethren” (Acts 1:14); “Have we not the right to travel about with a woman who is a sister, as the other apostles do, as the Lord’s brethren do, and Cephas?” (1 Cor 9:5).

The first thing to note, when trying to understand such verses, is that the term “brother” has a wide meaning in the Bible. It is not restricted to brothers german or half brothers. The same goes for “sister” and the plural “brethren”. Lot is described as Abraham’s “brother” (Gen 14:14), but Lot was the son of Aran, Abraham’s deceased brother (Gen 11:26-28); this means Lot was really Abraham’s nephew. Jacob is called the “brother” of his uncle Laban (Gen 29:15). Cis and Eleazar were the sons of Moholi; Cis had sons of his own, but Eleazar had no sons, only daughters, who married their “brethren”, the sons of Cis. These “brethren” were really their cousins (1 Chron 23:21-22),

The terms “brethren”, “brother”, and “sister” did not refer only to close relatives, as in the above examples. Sometimes they meant only a kinsman (Dt 23:7; 2 Esd 5:7; Jer 34:9), as in the reference to the forty-two “brethren”

of king Ochozias (2 Kings 10:13-14). The words could mean even people apparently unrelated, such as a friend (2 Sam 1:26; 1 Kings 9:13, 20:32), or just an ally (Amos 1:9).

Why this ambiguous usage? Because neither Hebrew nor Aramaic, the language spoken by Christ and his disciples, had a special word meaning “cousin”. Speakers of those languages used either the word for “brother” or a circumlocution, such as “the son of the sister of my father”. Using a circumlocution was a clumsy way to speak, so they naturally fell to using the word “brother”.

The writers of the New Testament were brought up to use the Aramaic equivalent of “brethren” to mean both cousins and sons of the same father—plus other relatives and even nonrelatives. When they wrote in Greek, they did the same thing the translators of the Septuagint did. In the Septuagint the Hebrew word that includes both true brothers and cousins was translated as *adelphos*, which in Greek has the (usually) narrow meaning that the English “brother” has. Unlike Hebrew or Aramaic, Greek has a separate word for cousin, *anepsios*, but the translators of the Septuagint favored *adelphos*, even for true cousins.

One might say they transliterated instead of translated. They took an exact equivalent of the Hebrew word for “brother” and did not use *adelphos* here (for sons of the same parents), *anepsios* there (for cousins). This same usage was employed by the writers of the New Testament and passed into English translations of the Bible. To determine just what “brethren” or “brother” or “sister” means in any one verse, we must look at the context. When we do that, we see insuperable problems arise if we assume that Mary had children other than Jesus.

At the Annunciation, when the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, she asked, “How can that be, since I have no knowledge of man?” (Lk 1:34). From the earliest interpretations of the Bible we see that this was taken to mean that she had made a vow of lifelong virginity, even in marriage. If she had taken no such vow, the question would make no sense at all.

There is no reason to assume Mary was wholly ignorant of the rudiments of biology. She presumably knew the normal way in which children are conceived. If she anticipated having children and did not intend to maintain a vow of virginity, she would hardly have to ask “how” she was to have a child, since having a child the normal way would be expected by a newlywed. No, her question makes sense only if there was an apparent, but

not a real, conflict between keeping a vow of virginity and acceding to the angel's request. A careful look at the New Testament shows Mary kept her vow and never had any children other than Jesus.

In the story of his being found in the Temple, Jesus, at age twelve, is mentioned as evidently the only Son of Mary (Lk 2:41-51); there is no hint of other children in the family. The people of Nazareth, where he grew up, refer to him as "the son of Mary" (Mk 6:3), not as "a son of Mary". The Greek expression implies he is her only son. In fact, others in the Gospels are never referred to as Mary's sons, not even when they are called Jesus' "brethren". If they were in fact her sons, this would be strange usage.

There is another point, perhaps a little harder for moderns, or at least Westerners, to grasp. It is that the attitude taken by the "brethren of the Lord" implies they are his elders. In ancient and, particularly, in Eastern societies (remember, the Holy Land is in Asia), older sons gave advice to younger, but younger never gave advice to older—it was considered disrespectful to do so. But we find Jesus' "brethren" saying to him that Galilee was no place for him and that he should go to Judaea so his disciples could see his doings, so he could make a name for himself (Jn 7:3-4). Another time, they sought to restrain him for his own benefit, saying, "He must be mad" (Mk 3:21). This kind of behavior could make sense for ancient Jews only if the "brethren" were older than Jesus, but that alone eliminates them as his brothers german, since Jesus, we know, was Mary's "first-born".

Consider what happened at the foot of the Cross. When he was dying, Jesus entrusted his Mother to the apostle John: "Jesus, seeing his mother there, and the disciple, too, whom he loved, standing by, said to his mother, Woman, this is thy son. Then he said to the disciple, this is thy mother. And from that hour the disciple took her into his own keeping" (Jn 19:26-27). The Gospels mention four "brethren", James, Joseph, Simon, and Jude, It is hard to imagine why Jesus would have disregarded family ties and made this provision for his Mother if these four were also her sons.

Fundamentalists are insistent nevertheless that "brethren of the Lord" must be interpreted in the strict sense. They most commonly make two arguments based on this verse: "And he knew her not till she brought forth her first-born son" (Mt 1:25). They first argue that the natural inference from "till" is that Joseph and Mary afterward lived together as husband and wife, in the usual sense, and had several children. Otherwise, they ask, bringing up their second point, why would Jesus be called "first-born"? Does that not mean there must

have been at least a “second-born”, perhaps a “third-born” and “fourth-born”, and so on?

The problem for them is that they are trying to use the modern meaning of “till” (or “until”) instead of the meaning it had when the Bible was written. In the Bible, it means only that some action did not happen up to a certain point; it does not imply that the action did happen later, which is the modern sense of the term. In fact, if the modern sense is forced on the Bible, some ridiculous meanings result.

Consider this fine: “Michal the daughter of Saul had no children until the day of her death” (2 Sam 6:23). Are we to assume she had children after her death? How about the raven that Noah released from the ark? The bird “went forth and did not return till the waters were dried up upon the earth” (Gen 8:7). In fact, we know the raven never returned at all. Then there was the burial of Moses. About the location of his grave it was said that no man knows “until this present day” (Dt 34:6)—but we know that no one has known since that day either. Or how about this: “And they went up to mount Sion with joy and gladness, and offered holocausts, because not one of them was slain till they had returned in peace” (1 Mace 5:54). Does this mean the soldiers were slain after they returned from battle?

The examples could be multiplied, but there should be no need. It should be clear that nothing at all can be proved from the use of the word “till” in Matthew 1:25. Recent translations give a better sense of the verse: “He had no relations with her at any time before she bore a son” (New American Bible); “he had not known her when she bore a son” (Knox translation).

The other argument used by fundamentalists concerns the term “first-born”. They say Jesus could not be called Mary’s “firstborn” unless there were other children that followed him. This is a misunderstanding of the way the ancient Jews used the term. For them it meant the child that opened the womb (Ex 13:2; Nb 3:12). Under the Mosaic law, it was the “first-born” son that was to be sanctified (Ex 34:20). Did this mean the parents had to wait until a second son was born before they could call their first the “first-born”? Hardly. The first male child of a marriage was termed the “first-born” even if he turned out to be the only child of the marriage. This usage is illustrated by a funerary inscription discovered in Egypt. The inscription refers to a woman who died during the birth of her “first-born”.

Fundamentalists also say it would have been repugnant for Mary and Joseph to enter a marriage and yet remain virgins. They call married virginity

an “unnatural” arrangement. Certainly it is unusual, but not as unusual as having the Son of God in one’s family, not as unusual as having a true virgin give birth to a child. The Holy Family was neither an average family nor even one suited to be chosen as “family of the year” from among a large number of similarly situated families. We should not expect its members to act as we would. The Holy Family is the ideal family, but not because it is like “regular” families in all major respects, only better. In major respects it is totally unlike any other family. The circumstances demanded that, just as they demanded the utmost in sacrifice on the part of Mary and Joseph. This was a special family, set aside for the nurture of the Son of God. No greater dignity could be given to marriage than that.

Backing up the testimony of Scripture regarding Mary’s perpetual virginity is the testimony of early Christian writings. Consider the controversy between Jerome and Helvidius. It was Helvidius, writing around 380, who first brought up the notion that the “brethren of the Lord” were children born to Mary and Joseph after Jesus’ birth. Jerome first declined to comment on Helvidius’ remarks because they were a “novel, wicked, and a daring affront to the faith of the whole world”.¹³ This was an entirely new interpretation, one nobody had ventured before, and it was beneath contempt.

At length, however, Jerome’s friends convinced him to write a reply, which turned out to be his treatise called *On the Perpetual Virginity of the Blessed Mary*. He used not only the scriptural arguments given above, but cited earlier Christian writers, such as Ignatius, Polycarp, Irenaeus, and Justin Martyr. Helvidius claimed the support of two writers, Tertullian and Victorinus, but Jerome showed this was no support at all, since Tertullian was a heretic (a Montanist) and the passage from Victorinus had been misinterpreted. Helvidius was unable to come up with a reply, and his theory was not employed again until modern times.

So, if it is established that the “brethren of the Lord” were not Jesus’ brothers german or half brothers, who were they? That they were Jesus’ cousins has been the accepted view at least from the time of Jerome until recent centuries. (Before Jerome the consensus was that they definitely were not Mary’s sons, but not necessarily that they were her nephews.)

Of the four “brethren” who are named in the Gospels, consider, for the sake of argument, only James. Similar reasoning can be used for the other three. We know that James’ mother was named Mary. Look at the descriptions of the women standing beneath the Cross: “Among them were

Mary Magdalen, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee” (Mt 27:56); “Among them were Mary Magdalen, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joseph, and Salome” (Mk 15:40). Then look at what John says: “And meanwhile his (Jesus’) mother, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalen had taken their stand beside the cross of Jesus” (Jn 19:25). If we compare these parallel accounts of the scene of the Crucifixion, we see that the mother of James and Joseph must be the wife of Cleophas. So far so good.

An argument against this, though, is that James is elsewhere (Mt 10:3) described as the son of Alphaeus, which would mean this Mary, whoever she was, was the wife of both Cleophas and Alphaeus. One solution is that she was widowed once, then remarried. More probably Alphaeus and Cleophas (Clopas in Greek) are the same person, since the Aramaic name for Alphaeus could be rendered in Greek in different ways, either as Alphaeus or Clopas. Another possibility is that Alphaeus took a Greek name similar to his Jewish name, the way that Saul took the name Paul.

So it is probable, anyway, that James is the son of this other Mary and Cleophas. If the testimony of Hegesippus, a second-century historian, is believed, Cleophas was the brother of Joseph, the foster father of Jesus.¹⁴ James would thus be Joseph’s nephew and a cousin of Jesus, who was Joseph’s putative son. This identification of the “brethren of the Lord” as Jesus’ cousins is open to legitimate question—they might even be relatives more distantly removed—and our inability to know certainly their status says nothing about the main point, which is that the Bible demonstrates that they were not, anyway, the Virgin Mary’s children.

Why are fundamentalists, particularly those most opposed to Catholicism, so insistent that Mary was not perpetually a virgin? There seem to be two reasons.

One is dislike of celibacy for priests and nuns. They are aware that it is Catholic teaching that celibacy is to be highly prized, that there is much virtue and much common sense in priests and nuns giving up the privilege of marriage in order to serve Christ better. They know Catholics refer to the example of Mary when praising consecrated virginity. So, by undermining her status, they hope to undermine that of priests and nuns. By claiming Mary did not live her life as a virgin, they hope to make religious celibacy seem contrary to the gospel.

The other reason concerns Mary herself. In the Catholic scheme of things,

she is certainly different from other women, so much so that she is considered worthy of special devotion (not of course of worship, *latria*, but of a level of honor, *hyperdulia*, higher than other saints receive). Her status accounts for the attention paid her. Fundamentalists think that what she gets, by way of devotion, is necessarily taken from Christ.

This is neither true nor logical, but they nevertheless think devotion to Mary must be discouraged if proper devotion to our Lord is to be maintained. One way to diminish her status is to show she was just like other women, more or less, and that can be done in part by showing she had other children. Their desire to do this tends to make impossible fundamentalists' accurate weighing of the facts. Their presuppositions do not allow them to see what the Bible really implies about the "brethren of the Lord".

Chapter 23

The Inquisition

Sooner or later, any exchange of views with fundamentalists will come around to the Inquisition. The topic can hardly be avoided. To non-Catholics the Inquisition is a scandal; to Catholics, an embarrassment; to both, a confusion. At the least, it is a handy stick with which to engage in Catholic-bashing, because most Catholics are at a loss for a sensible reply. The topic is so vast, its history so intricate, they do not know how to begin to respond to fundamentalists, even though few of the latter know the first thing about the Inquisition. What little they do know comes from tendentious little pamphlets written by people whose main interest is not historical accuracy.

The Inquisition was spread over six centuries and half a continent. It appeared first in southern France in response to Catharism and the civil discord that accompanied that religious and ideological plague, and later it was working, in fits and starts and in quite different formats, in Italy and the Holy Roman Empire, where it functioned for only a few decades in the thirteenth century. In between it was established in Spain, and there it became a creature of the state and was effectively out of the control of Church authorities.

Technically, five forms of the Inquisition may be distinguished. First came the episcopal, established in 1184 and operating mainly in France. Individual bishops ran the show, but not entirely well. Innocent III sought more control and established the legatine Inquisition, which was under the authority of the Cistercians. That was in 1198. Procedures were further formalized in 1231, when Gregory IX set up the monastic Inquisition, with the Dominicans in control. Commentators usually speak of these three forms as one institution, the Medieval Inquisition. It died out as Catharism disappeared.

Quite separate was the Roman Inquisition, begun in 1542 under Paul III. This was the one under which Galileo was tried, and it was the least active and most benign of the three main variations. Separate again was the Spanish Inquisition, begun in 1478, a state institution used to ferret out Jews and

Moors who converted to Christianity not out of conviction but for purposes of political or social advantage. It was the Spanish Inquisition that had the worst record.¹

Surprisingly enough, Loraine Boettner, the intellectual godfather of modern fundamentalist anti-Catholicism, has little to say about the Inquisition in his *Roman Catholicism*. One would think he would make more extensive use of the issue since it is such a fine weapon against the Church. He looks only at the Spanish Inquisition and then only briefly, relying mainly on an article appearing in *Christian Heritage* magazine in 1959. The author, Walter M. Montano, wrote that “it has been shown by [Juan Antonio] Llorente, who carefully examined the records of the Tribunal, and whose statements are drawn from the most authoritative sources, that 105,285 victims fell under the inquisitor general Torquemada; 51,167 under Cisneros; and 34,952 fell under Diego Perez. It is further reckoned that 31,912 were burned alive! Half that number, 15,659, suffered the punishment of the statute, and 291,450 were sent to penitentiaries. Half a million families were destroyed by the Inquisition, and it cost Spain two million children!”²

This quotation illustrates the reliability of sources used by fundamentalists such as Boettner, who does not inform the reader that Llorente, who had been appointed a secretary to the Inquisition in 1789, was hardly a responsible historian. In 1801 he was dismissed for alleged embezzlement. Although a Spaniard, he sided with the French when they invaded Spain in 1808. After the return of the Spanish king, Llorente retired to Paris, where in 1817 he published *The Critical History of the Spanish Inquisition*. He claimed to make use of official documents to which he said he had access, and it was from these documents he calculated the number of executions. When challenged on the figures, he said he had burned the papers on which he had relied.³ Critics have asked whether one can trust a man who says he destroyed original documents deliberately.

In any event, there is considerable dispute, even among honest historians, regarding how many deaths occurred under the Spanish Inquisition, and this is no place to settle that squabble. It is enough to note that responsible estimates vary, some historians asserting fewer than three thousand death sentences were handed down during three centuries, others putting the figure higher. As a point of comparison, Sir James Stephens, in his *History of English Criminal Law*, notes there were eight hundred executions a year during the early post-Reformation period in England, where the Inquisition

never operated.⁴ One could also refer to the burning of alleged witches, a practice almost unknown in Catholic countries. (Goethe, in his *Italienische Reise*, attributed the lack of belief in witches to Catholics' use of the confessional.)⁵ In Britain thirty thousand went to the stake for witchcraft; in Protestant Germany the figure was one hundred thousand.⁶ Such statistics do not make the Spanish executions right, but they perhaps indicate that severity in punishment was not due to Catholicism as such, but must be attributed to the general character of the times.

Most fundamentalists who write about the Inquisition rely on the books of Henry C. Lea (1825—1909), who published a massive three-volume account. His *History of the Inquisition in the Middle Ages*⁷ was called, in a priest's introduction to the French edition, "the most thorough history of the Inquisition which we possess". Remarkably enough, it is probably *still* the most thorough (at sixteen hundred pages, certainly the longest) history in English, for there have been few scholars willing to grapple with the all-encompassing historical analysis the institution demands.

It is unfortunate that it has been Lea's work that has molded public opinion in English-speaking countries, because, although it contains a great amount of data, it is marred by an unrelenting bias. "Honest he may be," said Elphege Vacandard, himself an authority on the Inquisition, "but impartial never. His pen too often gives way to his prejudices and his hatred of the Catholic Church. His critical judgment is sometimes gravely at fault."⁸ But his faults are virtues in the eyes of fundamentalists.

Lea was an American. His counterpart in England was Cambridge historian G. G. Coulton (1858—1947), an ardent foe of the Catholic Church and well known for his love of controversy. When the subject was Rome, the Cambridge don had difficulty containing himself. He might be known best for an exchange of letters he had with Arnold Lunn, the letters appearing as *Is the Catholic Church Anti-Social?* Lunn scolded Coulton for eating up an entire third of the book with a single letter that largely strayed from the agreed topic and focused instead on his pet anti-Catholic attacks.⁹ Coulton, too, is a favorite of literate fundamentalists.

Considering himself the English Lea, Coulton took pains to protect his mentor's reputation. Herbert Thurston, an English Jesuit who remarked that Lea's "work abounded in reckless deductions from inadequate evidence", said one could find ten palpable blunders on any ten consecutive pages of

Lea's books,¹⁰ Coulton, incensed, challenged him to prove it, had an associate select ten pages from Lea at random, and, in an act of magnanimity, threw in two pages extra. To his consternation Thurston pointed out fifteen blunders in the twelve pages. Coulton acknowledged to Lunn that Lea "had stumbled badly" and admitted his own "mistaken credulity".¹¹

One cannot conclude from this anecdote that all Lea and Coulton wrote about the Inquisition was wrong. They made real progress in basic research. Proper credit should not be denied them. The problem is that they could not weigh the facts properly because they were burdened with fierce animosity toward the Church—animosity that had nothing to do with the Inquisition as such. Their prejudices hindered them in separating reliable information from unreliable. They were too quick to accept statements unfavorable to the Church, too slow to dismiss statements inspired by malice similar to their own.

Of course, the contrary problem has not been unknown. Some Catholic writers, particularly those less interested in digging for truth than in giving a quick excuse, have glossed over incontrovertible facts and done what they could to whitewash the Inquisition, reminding one of hagiographers who reduce saints from human beings to porcelain dolls by ignoring awkward facts in their lives. This is as much a disservice to the truth as exaggerating the Inquisition's bad points. These well-intentioned but misguided Catholic apologists are, in one respect at least, much like Lea, Coulton, and the present strain of anti-Catholic fundamentalists. They fear, as the others hope, that the facts about the Inquisition will demonstrate the illegitimacy of the Catholic Church. But the facts will not do that at all. The Church has nothing to fear from the truth or a right appreciation of it. No account of foolishness, misguided zeal, or cruelty by Catholics can undo the divine foundation of the Church, although admittedly such things are stumbling blocks to Catholic and non-Catholic alike. What must be grasped is that the Church contains within itself all sorts of sinners and knaves, and some of them reach high rank. The wheat and chaff coexist in the Kingdom until the end, and that was how the Founder intended it.

The problem for fundamentalists is that they perceive the Church to contain only the elect. For them, sinners are outside the doors. Locate sinners, and one locates another place where the Church is not. It is easy to demonstrate sin operating through the Inquisition, at least to the extent dry records allow us to perceive sin at the remove of centuries, and for the

fundamentalist this proves the Inquisition, if it was the arm of a church, was the arm of a false church. Catholics, thinking fundamentalists might have a point, tend to be defensive. That is the wrong attitude. The right attitude for Catholics is to discover what really happened and to understand the Inquisition *in situ*—and then to explain to anti-Catholics, hard although this may be, why the sorry tale does not prove what they think it proves.

There can be no Catholic who would not wish that the Inquisition—or at least its bad elements, which were not coextensive with it—had never happened. In many respects, it was a logical consequence of the times and, for all its gore, not easily distinguishable from civil courts in its procedures and punishments, but the fact that cruelty can be found elsewhere in old records does not justify the cruelty that operated through the inquisitorial process.

How should a Catholic answer charges about the Inquisition? He should not attempt to deny the undeniable; history cannot be wished away. On the other hand, he should not, out of embarrassment, acquiesce in every fundamentalist slander. What he should try to do is give his questioner a little perspective. If he is able, the Catholic should learn enough about the Inquisition to give his opponent some sort of overview and to demonstrate that while much of what he knows about the Inquisition is true in quality, it is wrong in quantity. If understood, this may help the fundamentalist see that the mere existence of the Inquisition does not disprove the Church's credentials.

Many fundamentalists believe that more people died under the Inquisition than in any war or plague, but in this they rely on ridiculous “statistics” generated by one-upmanship among anti-Catholics, each of whom, it seems, tries to come up with the largest number of casualties. Trying to straighten out such historical confusions can take one only so far, of course, and one should not put undue emphasis on numbers. As Ronald Knox said, we should be cautious, “lest we should wander interminably in a wilderness of comparative atrocity statistics”.¹² In fact, no one knows how many people perished through the Inquisition. We happen to live in a century of statistics. Everything is quantified, and we save records the way squirrels save acorns, but often with far less reason. It is difficult for us to appreciate that in earlier centuries statistical abstracts were not drawn up because people saw no need for them. We do, indeed, have some records of how many people were executed, but they are spotty. No doubt most such records just disappeared

over the centuries, and there were probably few to begin with. We can make at best rough estimates of the number of deaths.

We can determine for certain, though, two things about the numbers given by most fundamentalists: they are exaggerated or, worse, fabrications. It would be one thing to err in extrapolations or calculations. An error of 100 or even 500 percent would not be large in piecing together what facts are available. But an error of 2.5 million percent? If you take the conservative figure that some Catholic scholars accept (around four thousand executions total, throughout the history of the Inquisition, in all countries where it operated), that is roughly the size of the error in the figure given in *The Mystery of Babylon Revealed*, a book that states that 95 million people were killed during the Inquisition.¹³

The figure of 95 million deaths is so grotesquely off that one immediately doubts the writer's sanity or at least his grasp of the elementary facts of demographics. Not until modern times did the population of the whole of Europe approach a million.¹⁴ The Inquisition did not operate in England, Scandinavia, Northern Europe, or Eastern Europe. Although on paper its extent was wide, in practice it was confined almost entirely to southern France, Italy, Spain, and a few parts of the Holy Roman Empire. The Black Death, which killed about a third of Europe's population, is credited by historians with major changes in the social structure. The Inquisition is credited with few, precisely because the number of its victims was by comparison small.

Far better than wasting time arguing about statistics that can only be roughly approximated or about numbers taken out of a magician's hat, the Catholic should ask the fundamentalist what he thinks the existence of the Inquisition demonstrates. After all, no fundamentalist will bring up the subject unless he thinks it proves something about the Catholic Church. What is that something? That the Church contains sinners? Guilty as charged. That at times sinners have reached positions of authority? Ditto. That even otherwise good Catholics, afire with zeal, sometimes lose their balance? True, all true, but such charges could be made and verified even if the Inquisition never existed.

Fundamentalist writers claim the Inquisition reveals the Catholic Church could not be the Church founded by Christ. They use the Inquisition as a good—perhaps their best—bad example. Yet to call an institution into question is not to prove it false, and the Church has not been false to its

commission. Individual Catholics, yes—it has always been that way, since the denials of Peter, and it will continue that way until the end—but no degree of un-saintliness on the part of Catholics proves the Church to be other than what it claims to be, even though that unsaintliness puts grave obstacles in the path of people outside and inside the Church. As a practical matter, there is only so much mileage in the anti-Catholics' argument, and they recognize it; most people perceive at once its weakness, how it can apply equally against Reformation Christianity. If the Inquisition establishes the falsity of Catholicism, the witch trials establish the falsity of Protestantism.

Perhaps a more compelling, if often unstated, reason fundamentalists bring up the Inquisition is that they think it was begun to “liquidate” fundamentalists. They identify themselves with Catharists (also known as Albigensians), or perhaps it is better to say they identify Catharists with themselves. They think Catharists were twelfth-century fundamentalists and that the Catholic Church did to them just what it would do to fundamentalists today if it had the means. This is a fantasy. Fundamentalist writers take one point—that Catharists used a vernacular version of the Bible—and conclude that these people were “Bible Christians”. The truth is that they were hardly Christians at all. Theirs was a curious heresy that perhaps (no one knows for sure) came to France from what is now Bulgaria. Catharism was a mixture of Gnosticism, which claimed a secret source of religious knowledge, and Manichaeism, which said matter is evil, and it had serious, civilization-destroying, social consequences.

Marriage was scorned because it legitimized sexual relations, which Catharists identified as the original sin. Concubinage was permitted because it was temporary and secret and was not given formal approval, while marriage was permanent, open, and publicly sanctioned. The consequences from such theories are not hard to imagine.

There was one key sacrament, the *consolamentum*, which could be received only once and which was absolutely necessary for salvation. Any sin committed after receiving the *consolamentum* deprived one of heaven. The Catharist thus waited until he was on his deathbed to receive his “baptism”. What followed next, for those who did not die promptly of natural causes, was the *endura*, which was not readily distinguishable from euthanasia. If the Catharist wanted to die as a “martyr”, he was suffocated with a pillow. If he wanted to go out as a “confessor”, he was starved to death. Religious

authorities would reside in the home of the dying Catharist to ensure his family did not sneak food in.

There was also a political angle to the heresy. Feudal society was based on the oath of fealty, much as ours is based on contract. Catharists denied the lawfulness of oaths, and that threatened to undermine the social fabric; imagine what would happen today if all contractual obligations, no matter how old or well established, were suddenly eliminated. Catharists interpreted Christ's words to Peter concerning tribute money ("then the children are free"; Mt 17:25) as authorizing them to withhold taxes and to refuse allegiance to secular rulers. Catharism was both a moral and a political evil. Even Lea admitted "the cause of orthodoxy was the cause of progress and civilization. Had Catharism become dominant, or even had it been allowed to exist on equal terms, its influence could not have failed to become disastrous." Whatever else might be said about Catharism, it was certainly not the same as modern fundamentalism, and fundamentalists' sympathy with the heresy is sadly misplaced.

What is needed by all disputants is perspective. Catholics in particular, if they want to see a discussion of the Inquisition result in understanding rather than fisticuffs, need to appreciate what is really in question. At one time Catholic apologists tried to justify all aspects of the Inquisition. That was foolish. There has never been any need for a whitewash. Today many Catholics fail to understand what fundamentalists are driving at, and they restrict themselves to secondary matters. Instead, they should discover what fundamentalists are trying to prove with their talk about hecatombs.

Granted, there is a certain utility, but a decidedly limited one, in demonstrating that the kinds and degrees of punishments inflicted by the Inquisition were similar to or even lighter than those generally meted out by secular courts. It is equally true that, despite what we consider the Inquisition's lamentable procedures, many people preferred to have their cases tried by ecclesiastical courts because the secular courts had fewer safeguards; indeed, when the Inquisition was abolished in Spain, people rioted in favor of its return. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* remarks accurately that "it is well known that belief in the justice of punishing heresy with death was so common among the sixteenth-century reformers—Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, and their adherents—that we may say their toleration began where their power ended".¹⁵ Jean Guitton has noted that "we must measure the horror of the remedy by the horror of the disease".¹⁶ And, as some have

pointed out, we should keep in mind that as recently as fifty years ago, torture (“the third degree”) was routinely used even by American police. Such arguments are better suited to discussions with reasonably informed people than with fundamentalists who think they can injure Catholicism by talking about judicial practices that are universally acknowledged, now, to be unjust. “The Inquisition was punctilious in its adherence to law,” wrote Donald Attwater, “but after full allowance has been made for ‘other times, other manners’, some of its procedure[s] and punishments must be set down as utterly unreasonable and in consequence cruel.”¹⁷ One should not seek to justify them, but to explain them and, most importantly, to explain how they could have been associated with a divinely established Church and how, from their existence, it is not proper to conclude that the Church of Rome is not the Church of Christ. This is where any discussion should focus.

Chapter 24

Practical Apologetics

Almost everyone has been through it. There is a knock at the door, usually at some inconvenient hour, and outside is a man with a wide smile, an open Bible, and awkward questions, beginning with, “Have you been saved, friend?” When he discovers you are a Catholic, which you volunteer in hope it will frighten him away, he reaches into his valise and brings out several Catholic Bibles. “Which would you prefer we use—New American Bible, Jerusalem Bible, maybe the old Douay-Rheims?” You talk with him for what seems like hours, and finally he goes away with an air of triumph, while you retire with a sore throat.

Or the altercation—somehow it always ends up being an altercation—starts after Mass. You exit church to find people distributing leaflets opposing Catholic beliefs. If you so much as look one of them in the eye, he rushes over, and you cannot wriggle your way through the crowd fast enough to get away. “Here’s the truth about the idolatry of the Mass”, you are told in an insistent voice as a tract is pressed into your hands. “Read it.”

“No, thanks; not interested”, you say, so he tells you, word for word, just what you would have read and keeps backing you toward the curb until you engage him in talk or step into whizzing traffic. You try being brusque, but even that does not discourage him.

Perhaps it starts in a social setting. At your prolife meeting, once the business session is over and everyone settles back for a little conviviality and a spot of tea, fundamentalists search out the Catholics. You sit in the corner, trying to be unobtrusive, but one sidles up to you anyway and, before you can ask her opinion about the first nonreligious topic that comes to mind, she leans over and asks, “Wouldn’t you like to have an absolute assurance of salvation?”

“Sure,” you say, “but. . .” You are interrupted as she motions you to wait while she flips heavily underlined pages of the New Testament to find just the right rebuttal to the comment you had no chance to make, and from there

it is a long evening and all downhill.

These discussions, whether with the fellow at your door, the pamphleteer outside church, or the woman at the meeting, seem to go nowhere. You know things are being taken out of context, but you do not remember what the context is. There are snappy rejoinders edging toward the tip of your tongue, but they fail to pass through your teeth. (Later you will kick yourself for not being quick-witted.) If you put Catholic beliefs into your own, unconsidered words, you find instead you have put your foot in your mouth and confirmed your adversary's worst suspicions. For some questions you do not have the vaguest hint of an answer; in fact, you have the nagging suspicion that maybe, just maybe, your opponent is on to something, God forbid.

You end up dissatisfied, and no one—least of all you—seems at all convinced by what you have said. Quite the contrary. Your interlocutor appears more set in anti-Catholic prejudices than ever, and people around you, if there are any left by the time you are through, seem to be muttering under their breath, presumably about your descent from Caspar Milquetoast. You did not handle the situation well, and you know it.

If there is a moral to this, it is that knowing *how* to argue is just as important as knowing *what* to argue. If you have no appreciation of technique, all the knowledge in the world will not help since you will not be able to pass it along. You can be a walking theological treatise (which, Lord knows, you are not), but if you antagonize opponents or talk past them, you have wasted your time and theirs. It is not enough to be a good conversationalist. That will not make up for doctrinal or historical ignorance. Style without substance is worthless. To be an effective apologist, you must marry delivery and content.

In the earlier chapters of this book you learned about the anti-Catholic movement among fundamentalists, its origins, its arguments, and what can be said to counter its charges. In the next chapter you will learn what to read to deepen your understanding of Catholicism and fundamentalism. That done, you naturally will want to know how to put your newfound knowledge to work. You will begin by recalling the motto of the Benedictine monks, *ora et labora*. You will begin your apologetics work with prayer. You will accomplish nothing—not merely a little, mind you, but nothing at all—without a serious prayer life. Even good works, such as “instructing the ignorant”, will go nowhere unless you put everything into God's hands—and not just at the outset, but daily, in your studies, in your discussions, in your

frustrations. Yes, especially in your frustrations, which will be many because your successes will seem so meager, so few. They will be there, but many of them you will never see. Fundamentalists did not become what they are overnight, particularly those who converted from Catholicism, and most of them, even if they ultimately find rest at Rome, will not move toward the Church with any speed you can detect. In most cases you plant a seed and let it germinate on its own. If a few people ask for more assistance, you give it, but for every fundamentalist whose opinion of the Church seems to be mellowing, there will be ten who seem as firmly anti-Catholic as ever. You have to let grace take its course.

How should you pray for this kind of apostolate? One way that makes sense is to meditate on scriptural passages. Why? Because it does double duty. It is at once prayer and work, the work being the inescapable reading you must do in the Bible. No matter how fine your religious training, no matter how well you think you know doctrines or Church history, you need to be at home with Scripture if you intend to make an impression on fundamentalists. Of course, you should be conversant with the Bible anyway, not solely in preparation for controversy, but for its own sake—for *your* own sake.

If the only thing that gets you to open the Bible is umbrage at the latest anti-Catholic slander, that will do for starters. You might say it is like contrition versus attrition. Perfect contrition, sorrow arising out of love of God, is the ideal in confession, but you will have your sins forgiven if the best you can manage is attrition, fear of punishment. Reading the Bible because it is the word of God is better than reading it because you need to find replies to fundamentalists' accusations—but any port in a storm. The important thing is to start reading; once you do, it will be easy to make a habit of turning to the sacred text.

Concentrate on the New Testament, but not to the exclusion of the Old. It is more important to go through the New Testament a dozen times than to go through the Old twice. There is no need to memorize great chunks of the Bible, the way some fundamentalists do. You should be especially familiar, though, with the Gospels. If you are not at ease with the details of Christ's life, you are in trouble. Frank Sheed, the great street-corner apologist, put it this way: "A Catholic apologist who is not soaked in the Gospels is an anomaly in himself, and his work is doomed to aridity."¹

The New Testament is short enough to be read in the evenings of a single

week. Spend several weeks with it before doing anything else, paying particular attention to the Gospels, but not ignoring the Epistles. Work in the Old Testament gradually. Not all of the Old Testament is needed for your work, so do not worry if you take a year or two to get to parts of it, but do make an effort to read the historical and the major prophetic books as soon as possible. You should not, of course, read the Bible to the exclusion of other works because, if you do, you will end up lacking perspective, like many fundamentalists. Still, the Bible has to be the ground of your other reading.

But which Bible? It does little good to purchase the “best” version, whichever that may be objectively, if you will not read it. You are not interested in an ornament for the coffee table, but in a book you can pick up as comfortably as your favorite novel. The best version for you will be the version you will read. If the one you choose is what most people regard as an inferior edition, you can graduate to a superior one later. The first thing is to get in the habit of Bible reading. Once you do, it will be easy to take up a superior translation.

It might be wise to purchase several translations even if you know which you will use for your regular reading. The reason? To compare renderings. If you know no Greek, Hebrew, or Latin, the best way to get a feel for the meaning of a verse is to see how different translations phrase it. Particularly useful will be a cheap copy of the King James Version of the New Testament. Most fundamentalists use that translation—some not even knowing it *is* a translation but believing it is the original—and discussions are often made easier if their wording can be compared with yours, particularly since a number of their confusions arise from misunderstanding seventeenth-century diction.

You have heard the adage that “the exception proves the rule”. Of course, the exception *disproves* the rule, if you think about it, but that is using prove in the modern sense of substantiate. When the adage was not an adage but a current idiom, the word prove (coming from the Latin *probare*, from which we get our word probate) did not mean substantiate, but test. An exception was said to test, to bend, even to snap a rule, and in that sense the saying is quite true. When prove is used in the modern sense, the saying is flat-out wrong. It is this kind of confusion that afflicts some fundamentalists who insist on using the King James Version. They use twentieth-century instead of seventeenth-century definitions, and that puts them on the wrong track.

This can be demonstrated if you show them one or more modern translations alongside the King James.

Familiarize yourself with anti-Catholic literature. See what topics are emphasized: the Bible as the sole rule of faith, justification by faith alone, the “idolatry of the Mass”, “worship” of Mary and the saints, “Catholic inventions”, and much more. See how the arguments, weak as they are, are handled. You will perceive at once, if you have not already noticed, that anti-Catholic materials are skewed, but if you cannot think of complete and ready rejoinders, make notes and study up. It will hardly do to say, “I can’t remember why that’s wrong, but it is, and you’ll just have to take my word for it.” The Appendix gives addresses of some of the anti-Catholic organizations mentioned in this book; write for samples of their literature. Once you have understood their arguments and have learned more about your own faith, you will be ready to engage in friendly arguments.

There are two preliminary points to keep in mind when arguing with fundamentalists. The first is that there is nothing wrong, in itself, with arguing. Some people have the mistaken notion that all argumentation is uncharitable, but that tells more about their own arguing skills, or lack of them, than anything else. After all, people who find their own arguments resulting in fisticuffs do not really know how to argue and cannot be expected to think arguments can be profitable. The second point is that most fundamentalists welcome a good argument; they want to be challenged, and they want to see if their position “works”. Many of them have been trained to argue with Catholics whom they seek to evangelize, though, to be sure, they do not expect Catholics to argue back.

You will discover that most fundamentalists have a surprisingly limited repertoire of accusations. (Do not confuse them with the professional anti-Catholics, whose accusations are seemingly endless, which is to be expected of people who make their livings attacking Rome.) Most fundamentalists, even those trained for small-scale anti-Catholic work, have done far less reading in Catholicism than you already have done in fundamentalism, if you have read the previous chapters. They are told Catholics not only know nothing about the Bible, but little about their own Faith, so they expect to accost people who are pushovers. It is disturbing enough to them to find Catholics answering their questions instead of standing openmouthed; it is worse to be put on the defensive and to be forced to answer pointed questions about fundamentalism. This few of them are trained to do, and in short order

they take refuge in the plea that they need to check with their pastors. Do not gloat when you see them forced to make a strategic retreat. You soon might be “advancing toward the rear” yourself.

When arguing, do not argue to win. You can “win” yet drive people further from the Church. Argue to explain. Your task is to show fundamentalists the Catholic position from the inside, not to make cheap debater’s points. You must scrupulously avoid striving for quick victories with which to impress onlookers, and you must realize that each time you sink to the *ad hominem*, you alienate another listener and the Church loses another present or prospective member. People who interpret “argument” to mean raised voices, large gesticulations, and cutting remarks are not suited to apologetics. All these are out. The skills of a good apologist are not the same as the skills of a good orator or a good debater, much less of a second-class orator or debater. Instead, strive for the skills of a good missionary, because that is what an apologist is.

This work is not for people with thin skins or short fuses. Losing your temper, or being thrown off balance by someone who loses his, means you have lost an opportunity for clearing away mental cobwebs. If you take offense at being called pagan or blasphemous or stupid when explaining Catholic doctrines, if you flaunt your annoyance and cannot help shaking your head when confronted with unthinking comments, find some other way to occupy your spare time.

If you stick with apologetics, you will discover soon enough the lure of verbal combat, which, although an unbloody warfare, can leave wounds every bit as lethal as those inflicted with regular munitions. It must be done right or not at all. Remember, you are not opposing fundamentalism so much as explaining Catholicism; your work is essentially positive and constructive, not negative and destructive. To the extent you do oppose fundamentalism (after all, error should be countered, even when mixed with truth), make sure you oppose fundamentalism and not fundamentalists.

Not everyone opposing the Catholic religion is a loon or is working in bad faith, and, if you cannot appreciate that, you will do more harm than good. Few fundamentalists, even those who are actively anti-Catholic, do what they do out of spite. They are working with clear consciences, but they have been misinformed. Perhaps they should have done more homework, but the fault is not entirely theirs. They trust the sources they have had, but now they should be *shown there is* more to consider. You will not get them to open their

minds by encouraging them to close their hearts. Hatred directed against the Church cannot be offset by hatred on behalf of the Church. You must approach fundamentalists in charity.

When you do enter discussions, avoid verse-slinging. It accomplishes little. A barrage of biblical citations overwhelms only those ignorant of the Bible. The first time fundamentalists cornered you with verses that were unfamiliar, you did not know what to say. You had not even heard some of the lines before, and the rest, in an odd translation, sounded not quite right. True, you were unconvinced by this tactic, but you *were* thrown for a loop. Later, you did your homework and learned there was nothing to fear. The verses, if read in context, really supported the Catholic Faith, just as this way of arguing no longer impresses you, if it ever did, it does not impress fundamentalists who find Catholics using it in return. They already have a fixed interpretation of each line of the Bible, and their interpretations cannot be overcome by your quoting the text and stopping there. Mere quotation is not enough. You have to go step by step, explaining what each verse means, but before you do that, you have to give an overview of the subject under discussion. Tossing quotations left and right is a waste of time.

Do not go to the other extreme and fail to use biblical citations. They are absolutely necessary if you want to make your points effectively. What is to be avoided is the carefree tossing around of verses that only seem to be related, usually because they have a word in common. For example, to refute the Catholic notion that “rock” in Matthew 16:18 refers to Peter, fundamentalists list as many verses as they can find in which “rock” refers to God. They do not bother to look at Matthew 16:18 in itself, and they forget that the whole point of the verse is precisely that Peter was being given a title usually reserved to God—and what did *that* signify?

Your goal is to reorient your listeners, giving them a new perspective. Remember, they think they take their beliefs straight from the Bible. In fact, the Bible is used to substantiate already-held beliefs. They begin with their own “tradition”, which is generally their pastor’s interpretation of the Bible. For many fundamentalists, their pastor is their pope. They accept his every word. When confronted with hard questions, they do not turn to the Bible to discover the answers; they say instead, “Let us ask our pastor.” What is more, their faith is largely colored by the church they attend. Some denominations emphasize one aspect of belief; others emphasize others. The assurance of salvation is the subject of the majority of sermons at some churches, the

Second Coming at others, and baptism by immersion at still others. Congregants will be especially familiar with scriptural passages relating to their pastor's favorite doctrines, will be less familiar with passages relating to other fundamentalist doctrines, and might be quite unfamiliar with the rest of the Bible.

You must enter discussions with a plan. Know what the main points should be, and then stick with them. All anti-Catholics concentrate on a few scriptural passages that seem damaging to Catholicism. Take the initiative. Address their points, but do not allow them to ask all the questions. Ask your own. You of course must know how to respond to their standard charges, but be prepared to bring up issues they conveniently skip. Put them on the spot and point out the weaknesses of fundamentalism. Do this not to demonstrate how smart you were for choosing the Catholic Church, but to emphasize that although much of what they hold is true, some is not, and for the fullness of truth they need to look to Rome.

One of the most annoying things in getting into a conversation with evangelistic fundamentalists (that is not redundant: not all of them are evangelistic) is that you do not seem to get a word in edgewise. You do not seem to be able to steer the conversation your way. The less well versed you are in Catholicism, the worse the problem. The discussion may start with the most common question, "Are you saved?" Or it may start with any of several standard openings. It seems as though you hardly start to form a reply when more questions are thrown at you, each leading you further into uncharted areas. You feel adrift, unable to turn to a topic on which you have done your homework. By the time your interlocutor decamps, you feel stymied, having given no good answers and having posed no good questions.

You need to learn a few techniques for taking charge. Here is one, and it is simple: sidestep the first question and pose your own, so you can turn the conversation to your favorite topic. It is not at all rude to do this; you are under no obligation to let yourself be led around by the nose. Until you are at ease with all the major issues, so that you can handle any likely opening by fundamentalists, you may *have* to do this if you want to get anywhere in your apologetics work.

The way to do it is to use Jesus' ploy (though of course he did not do this for the reasons you would), Recall how he responded when the chief priests and elders approached him and asked, "What authority have you for acting like this? And who gave you this authority?" Jesus said, "I will ask you a

question, just one; if you tell me the answer to it, then I will tell you my authority for acting like this” (Mt 21:23-24). He took charge of the discussion by bringing up the point he wanted to discuss, by setting aside his questioners’ topic.

Do the same kind of thing yourself. Let us assume you are asked, “Where does the Bible mention purgatory?” And let us assume you are not up to discussing purgatory, having not done your homework, but are up to discussing the notion of *sola scriptura*. You can use this approach: “I’d be happy to talk about that if we can first talk about why you think the Bible is the sole rule of faith. After all, your question implies we should look to the Bible alone. I want you to substantiate your belief, since, so far as I understand it, the Bible nowhere says it is the sole rule of faith.” Then take it from there. Follow up with more questions. You may or may not get back to purgatory—if you do, you will just have to wing it—but you will steer the conversation (mainly) to topics on which you are prepared.

Now of course this is an expedient, not an ideal. In point of fact you should be able to explain purgatory, but you have to operate based on how things are, not on how they ought to be. You cannot become a theological whiz overnight. You can discuss only what you know, and, until you can handle most topics with facility, you will have to be able to turn conversations to topics with which you are at ease. It would be nice to wait until you had every issue, major and minor, down pat, but are you going to want to start engaging in apologetics as a nonagenarian? Work with what you have, and learn what more you can, but do not keep the bench warm waiting for a revelation.

Keep in mind that your fundamentalist opponents are not really any more knowledgeable than you are today—quite possibly less. They seem more knowledgeable because they pose the first question and usually steer the conversation, yet they can get flustered easily. Their success, like the aura of invincibility they exude, depends entirely on your ignorance. As likely as not, they would not know what to say if you made intelligent responses or posed tough questions of your own. They have been trained much like the newspaper boy who comes to the door with a memorized patter. You have seen it often enough. If the boy recalls his lines, and if you keep your mouth shut, everything goes well, and he might have a new subscriber. If you ask him anything about the paper other than the price, he does not know what to say. His delivery depends on your allowing him to stick with his canned talk.

It is the same with most fundamentalists. They undergo a short course in “soul winning” and are trained to recite a fixed patter on the assumption that people they talk to, including virtually all Catholics, do not know enough about Christianity to ask tough questions of their own. The fundamentalists’ instructors are mostly right in training them this way. The technique works well, which is why it is used. They expect to have doors slammed in their faces, but they do not expect to be talked back to—at least not intelligently. When you throw out a question of your own and take charge of the conversation, as often as not they do not know what to say. They have been told how to go about “soul winning”, but they receive little training in being on the defensive. Why prepare for the statistically improbable? By taking charge of the discussion, you not only keep yourself from getting frustrated, you get to evangelize the evangelist. The discussion over, retire to your study and bone up on one of the topics you are still unsure about.

By the way, never be afraid to acknowledge ignorance. If you do not know the answer to a question, say so. You will survive, and so will your ego. The answers you give on other points will be taken more seriously if people you speak with see you are not trying to bluster your way through a conversation. There is nothing easier to spot than a fake.

You must be absolutely honest. Never pretend doctrines or facts are other than they really are. Do not avoid the hard cases, but do not pander to your listeners either. Never succumb to the temptation to tell them what they want to hear or, more commonly, not to tell them what they do not want to hear. Christ informed the people of his day that there would be many things difficult to accept in his teaching. Acceptance has gotten no easier. Whether doctrinal or moral, there is no need to try to make hard truths palatable. Just state them as they are, but first know what they are. Admit your ignorance (to yourself at least), then do your homework. An embarrassment today can result in fuller understanding—and better apologetics—tomorrow.

Early on, discuss the history of the Bible. You need to make plain it was the Church that formed the Bible, not the Bible that formed the Church. Note, too, that the New Testament was not designed as a catechism. Its various parts were written to people who already were Christians, so it could not have been intended as the sole source of religious teaching. In the beginning, teaching was oral and was under the authority of the Church, which eventually decided what books belonged to the Bible and what did not.

Fundamentalists say, “Let us start by admitting that the Bible is the sole

rule of faith.” Translation: “Let us admit the Church has no authoritative role; all answers to religious questions are to be found on the face of Scripture only.” Do not agree to it. It just begs the question, and it is untrue. As a counter, ask your opponents to try to prove that the Bible was intended to be the sole rule of faith. The Bible itself makes no such claim (it calls itself “profitable” for salvation, not the sole rule of faith), but you have to know which verses to cite to prove that.

Fundamentalists also say that if a doctrine is not clearly in the Bible, it is not a doctrine to be held by Christians. This ignores what the Bible really is and what it is not. As Frank Sheed put it in one of his last books, *Death into Life*, “The Gospels give a selection of what Christ did and said, with each writer choosing the elements needed for the portrait he was drawing. The Epistles were for the most part written as the occasion arose—some point of doctrine was being misinterpreted, perhaps. Thus one cannot argue from the silence of the New Testament that any particular doctrine was not being taught. Purgatory for instance!”²

No matter how well they have memorized it, fundamentalists know little other than the Bible, which they know only selectively. They know little Church history, little formal theology. They may never have seen a catechism. You must provide the larger picture. If the topic is an interpretation of a scriptural passage, go to a good commentary and study up, but also go straight to the Fathers of the Church to learn what they wrote about the subject and to books dealing with the history of doctrines and Catholic customs. Appeals to early Christian writers are often useful. Explain to your listeners that finding out what the first Christians understood the apostles to teach is crucial. Make them see it is unlikely that people who were writing when the Church was young and memories of Christ were vivid would erroneously report what beliefs the early Church started with or how it interpreted Scripture. If early Christian writers took it for granted that a sacrificial priesthood was established by Christ (which they did), that fact is a powerful argument in support of the priesthood. If writers living a few generations after Christ mentioned the Real Presence (which they did), that argues in favor of the Catholic interpretation of John 6. Try to show a doctrine in relation to other doctrines, a custom in relation to other customs, New Testament times in relation to the immediately following centuries. It is important for fundamentalists to see the Church and Church history as a totality. You will have to show them how everything fits together.

Ecclesiastical history is a messy discipline. It is not nearly as well formed as dogmatic or moral theology. Even if you never are inclined to misrepresent teachings of the Church, you might be tempted to put an unwarrantedly good face on some event or person in its history. There is a tendency to want every Catholic to look good in everything he does, to have him make the right decisions at all times, as though he had been blessed with preternatural prescience. Conversely, there is a temptation to think someone outside the Church is always working in bad faith.

It is a mistake to paint historical characters in white and black only, each Catholic being angelic, each Protestant devilish. If you approach history that way, you either will make no progress in understanding it, or your first impressions soon will be discarded as you discover the humanity of the people behind the events. We begin our reading or writing, naturally enough, with certain predispositions, but these need to be refined as we progress—or we are not progressing at all.

In the preface to his masterwork, *Enthusiasm*, Ronald Knox noted he had been writing the book “for thirty years and a little more; no year has passed but I have added to it, patched it, rewritten it, in the time that could be spared from other occupations”. It did not turn out as he first thought it would.

To be sure, when the plan of the Book was first conceived, all those years ago, it was to have been a broadside, a trumpet-blast, an end of controversy. . . . [H]ere, I would say, is what happens inevitably, if once the principle of Catholic unity is lost! All this confusion, this priggishness, this pedantry, this eccentricity and worse, follows directly from the rash step that takes you outside the fold of Peter! All my historical figures, Wesley himself included, were to be a kind of rogues’ gallery, an awful warning against illuminism. But somehow, in the writing, my whole treatment of the subject became different; the more you got to know the men, the more human did they become, for better or worse.³

In a way, Knox ended up admiring John Wesley, “a man so far in reaction from the tendencies of his age that he seems a living commentary on them, yet so much a child of his age that you cannot think of him fitting in with any other”.⁴ Knox could write about the plain’ goodness of the man and still remark that his message and that of his followers “was simple only in so far as they left nine-tenths of Christian doctrine out of consideration, and concentrated on the remaining tenth—soteriology”,⁵ a comment that applies perfectly to today’s fundamentalists, in so many ways the heirs of Wesley, although they may not realize it. To be sure, no modern fundamentalists, overtly anti-Catholic or otherwise, can be put on Wesley’s plane, but the

point Knox was making applies to them still: these are, in the main, good people, and grace has not passed them by.

Just as you should not presume the worst on the part of Protestants, do not get into the habit of swallowing everything said or done by Catholics. It may astonish some to learn that on occasion individual Catholics have been wrong, their Protestant opponents right—the Catholics having missed the truly Catholic position on an issue, the Protestants having stumbled across it. What is more, the number of canonized saints is small, and with good reason. Even with all the spiritual wellsprings found in the Church, many of its members fare poorly, at least in comparison to their hopes and everyone else's expectations. We are consistently off the mark—but we would be lost entirely if it were not for the Church.

When talk turns to awkward points of Church history, do not misrepresent them. Do not hide blemishes. There is no need to. Put things in context, and remind your listeners that the Kingdom of God (a term that, in the Bible, usually refers to the Church rather than heaven) contains wheat and chaff, saints and sinners. But be careful how you phrase rebuttals. Here is a cautionary example.

Fundamentalists with a little knowledge of the papacy will inquire about the “bad Popes”. A few decades ago, among Catholic apologists it was considered clever to answer in this vein: “Yes, there have been some ‘bad Popes’, perhaps six or seven men being truly unworthy of the office. Given the large number of Popes, this is a proportion of about one in forty. On the other hand, one in twelve of the men Christ himself chose turned out bad.” True, but not convincing by itself. No, you have to approach the problem in a different way. Mere cleverness will not do.

Sarcasm will not do either. Sarcasm always backfires. Avoid it even when your opponents stoop to it. When they do, their consciences will annoy them later; if their consciences are dormant, things will eventually catch up with them anyway. Do not allow them to justify their rudeness by exchanging wisecrack for wisecrack. Keep clear of name-calling. If you see a fundamentalist thumping a Bible (and some do so, quite literally), do not refer to him as a Bible thumper, even if he sneeringly calls you a papist or Romanist or something worse. Allow him the title of Christian, even if he will not return the favor.

Granted, at times the temptation to give as one has received will be overpowering; make a resolution not to repeat the offense, then continue with

your work. Ignoring rudeness is usually easier to accomplish when it comes to you in a letter rather than straight to your face. A letter you can put aside until your temper cools, but an oral insult seems to call for an instant and thus unreflecting response. Make a real effort to keep your tongue in check.

To argue effectively, you not only will have to control your temper; you also will have to know what fundamentalists mean by particular terms. You can waste much time by discussing two different things while using the same terminology. Consider faith. For Catholics, faith is the acceptance of revealed truths, doctrines, on God's word alone. This is called theological or confessional faith. For fundamentalists, faith is trust in Christ's promises, not belief in a set of dogmas. This is called fiducial faith. Tradition is another confusing term. In the New Testament are injunctions not to adhere to the "traditions of men". When fundamentalists hear Catholics say the twin sources of revealed truth are Scripture and Tradition, they equate Tradition with "traditions of men", and they conclude the Catholic Church is contradicting the Bible directly. Terms you might think can be taken only univocally, such as inspiration and heaven, can mean something quite different to fundamentalists.

Avoid technical words unless a thorough grounding has been laid. Even Catholics misunderstand what is meant by transubstantiation, Immaculate Conception, and hypostatic union. On the other hand, do not be monosyllabic. To oversimplify is to sidestep fine points, which is equally bad. Do not presume a question means what it seems to mean. Find out what your inquirers really are talking about. Take time. If the question refers to the Virgin Birth, make sure they do not mean the birth of the Virgin. Take up a single topic at a time; look at it leisurely, from several angles, and never presume fundamentalists know what you mean by apparently simple terms such as soul, revelation, Mass. If they did, they would not have such odd ideas of what the Church stands for. You have to speak with them the way you would speak with uninstructed Catholics.

Keep your expectations modest. Do not expect conversions, because they are not overnight things. Count yourself successful if your opponents leave with the feeling that there is a sensible, even if not acceptable, Catholic response to each of their charges. It would be a great triumph just to have an active anti-Catholic withdraw from the fray and mull things over. You have to give things time.

After all, no one is born anti-Catholic. There are not even any "cradle anti-

Catholics” to parallel “cradle Catholics”. Often the most vituperative foes of the Church, both within and without fundamentalism, are former Catholics who left the Church as adults. Their leaving was a slow process of unperceived difficulties turning into doubts, of doubts turning into denials, of denials turning into affirmations of new doctrines. To expect a sudden reconversion is to ignore human nature.

Fundamentalists think Catholics have no answers at all to the usual charges and believe a few snappy questions are all it takes to transfix a Catholic, to leave him dumbfounded, groping helplessly for answers that are not there. They forget that while their “born-again” experience may have been of a moment’s duration, it came only after a long leave-taking of the Catholic religion. They did not fall away from their old Faith in an instant, as though struck down on the Damascus Road.

Similarly, their return, if there is to be one, will not be quick. It will take months, even years, before they begin to see the Church as it really is and begin to shed their prejudices, each prejudice acquired with difficulty and let go with even more. So, if an active anti-Catholic sits things out for a while, that is as much as can be expected. If he at length gets a few things straight about Catholicism, there likely will follow an avalanche of understanding. Perhaps he will come all the way home, either with your help or on his own, or he may remain a fundamentalist while ceasing to be an anti-Catholic. Although you would wish more for him personally, defusing an agent of anti-Catholic bigotry would be a success in itself, because that would mean fewer Catholics would be enticed out of the Church before they could be authentically catechized (or recatechized, as the case may be) and fewer fundamentalists would have their prejudices reinforced.

From the beginning you must make those outside see what the Church’s positions really *are*. Do not start by justifying Catholic doctrines through apposite Bible passages or appeals to syllogistic reasoning. Those can be effective techniques, and at some point they will be necessary, but at the very beginning they invite digressions. First you need to show your listeners what the Church really teaches. They almost always will have preconceived and quite wrong notions.

Your first task, then, and often your hardest, is to get terminology straight and to be able to explain, in your own words, what Catholics hold. Only once the doctrines are understood in themselves should you turn to their justifications, but showing what doctrines mean is the principal task you

have. Until you do that, you cannot move forward. Once you have the definitions clear, fundamentalists, like other non-Catholics who have gone through similar instruction, will want to learn more because they will have been introduced to something fresh, something whole, something fulfilling. They will have glimpsed the unity of Christianity for the first time.

Chapter 25

Food for the Mind

The prospective apologist needs thorough preparation, both in answering specific questions and in preparing a stronger general foundation for his own faith. The books discussed in this chapter will transform an average Catholic whose gut feelings are right into one who not only knows the answers to the questions that used to stump him, but now can pass on his newfound learning in away that others, far more confused than he ever was, can understand. These books are not the only ones worthy of study, of course, but they have proved particularly useful in the specialized task of dealing with fundamentalist attacks on the Catholic religion.¹

In what order these books will be read will depend largely on one's predispositions. Some can be taken up and put down at leisure; reading in snatches is quite sufficient. Others need to be read in a more sustained fashion—not in one evening necessarily, assuming that is even possible for people not afflicted with insomnia, but over a short period of time. One needs to set aside time daily so the first chapter is not forgotten by the time the last is reached. Just as the story line can be lost if one puts down a novel for any length of time, so the overall picture some of these books were designed to give will not be apprehended if one dallies in reading them.

Some of the material will have to be gone over more than once—you will want to read some things several times, just for your own enjoyment—and even then, after all this work, you will still need access to other, more detailed works, such as the *Catholic Encyclopedia* (the preferred 1914 edition, available through Catholic used-book dealers) or the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (1967 edition, inferior in coverage but adequate).

The Catholic unsure of his intellectual stamina should not be scared off. He does not have to try to devour the whole pie. Much good can be done, both for oneself and for non-Catholics, by getting the basics, by reading only the key works. (Anyone who would read the whole of an encyclopedia is an indiscriminating pedant and would never make it as an apologist!)²

Keep in mind that it is not enough to have absorbed general overviews of Catholicism, however good they might be. That will not prepare you to withstand a barrage of criticism. You will wilt under the onslaught of specific and often surprising questions, each of which needs to be handled if people confused about the Faith are to have their doubts cleared up. The trouble is that writers of surveys of Catholicism do not ask tough questions or put you on the spot. That is not their purpose. They presume you are predisposed to the Faith and are seeking to broaden your knowledge generally. That is admirable and necessary, but you can have a general grasp yet be unable to say anything sensible to fundamentalists when they question you, because their questions throw you for a loop. You will rarely guess correctly how they will phrase their accusations, because your presuppositions are different. It takes a Catholic considerable training and a long tenure in the school of hard knocks to begin to think like a fundamentalist, to pose the kinds of questions fundamentalists pose.

To get a feel for what you would be up against, particularly if you want to do apologetics work on a serious basis, you need to see just what fundamentalists say about the Church—and in their own words. Write to anti-Catholic organizations (see the Appendix for addresses) and request sample literature. Some Catholics hesitate doing this. They cannot bear giving professional anti-Catholics a penny. They think doing so is almost treasonous. The feeling is understandable, but it is a matter of false scruples. If you were a military commander and your counterpart on the other side had written a book outlining his tactical theories, you would be wise to let him have the royalties and get a copy of his book into your hands as soon as possible. You would owe it to your cause.

So write away for anti-Catholic literature, study it, and learn on which topics you need help, but do not limit yourself to acquiring tracts. No collection of anti-Catholic material would be complete without a copy of Loraine Boettner's *Roman Catholicism*.³ Many Protestant bookstores carry it; if it cannot be found on the shelves, it can be ordered through them or through any other bookstore. Although a fat hardback, it is cheap, and some fundamentalist and evangelical bookstores carry it at a good discount over the already-low cover price, perhaps a prime reason it has been disseminated so widely.

The core of many arguments, historical or otherwise, will be the Bible, and the apologist needs to be at ease with it. Fundamentalists often work on the

principle that the Bible is such a straightforward book that any literate person can pick it up and, without much trouble, find the correct interpretation of any passage, presuming he has been “born again”. Those not reborn, in the fundamentalists’ sense of the term, have no guarantee they will arrive at the right understanding.

Fundamentalists think the intervening centuries have not made the Bible any more confusing for us than it was for people who lived in New Testament times, and they think that way (although they do not realize it) because they begin, not with the Bible, but with an accepted set of beliefs, which they then substantiate by “searching the Scriptures”.

The truth is that the Bible is both an easy and a difficult book. It is easy in its language—no jargon or bureaucratese here—but it is difficult in that it is not really one book, but six dozen books composed over centuries for a variety of reasons and audiences. No sacred writer thought, as he sat down with pen and papyrus, that he was adding the *n*th chapter to a single book in the way that, some years ago, there was a fad among writers of detective stories to compose books each chapter of which was by a different author and was built directly on the chapters preceding.⁴ No, the Bible is better thought of as a miscellany. The New Testament alone has several kinds of writings: four partially overlapping biographies, something at once a history and a travelogue, private letters written to individuals and open ones written to small communities, and an example of a peculiar kind of literature, the apocalyptic. The same goes for the Old Testament, which contains still other kinds of works: law codes, prophetic utterances, poetry, even an extended love song.

The Catholic needs to read the Bible, of course, and to read it regularly, but that is hardly enough. He needs also works that will make up for time lost, that will give him insights that he might reach only after decades of assiduous and prayerful reading of the sacred text, and he needs an appreciation of the background of the Bible, of the kinds of works it contains, and of methods and theories of interpretation. Only when he has this will his Bible reading turn truly fruitful.

The first thing, then, after securing one or more translations of the Bible itself, to buy is a commentary. Still available from used-book dealers is *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*,⁵ published in Britain in 1953 and using the Douay-Rheims translation. The editorial committee was headed by Bernard Orchard, and contributors included such men as B. C. Butler,

Thomas Corbishley, C. C. Martindale, E. C. Messenger, and Hugh Pope.⁶ In addition to commentaries on individual books of the Bible, this work includes thirty-five articles introducing the Old and New Testaments and examining such topics as the synoptic problem, the various texts and versions of the Bible, proper interpretation, inspiration and inerrancy, and the geography and history of Israel.

In 1969 appeared *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*,⁷ using the Revised Standard Version instead of the Douay-Rheims. About a fifth of the original edition was carried over, as were several of the original contributors. The new edition is superior in some ways (for example, it takes into account real advances in biblical scholarship), but it may not appeal to everyone in other ways.

As a substitute or supplement one should consider *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*,⁸ first published in 1968 and since updated and stocked by most Catholic bookstores. Although this American commentary is not as trustworthy as its British counterparts, it is still worth having, and the orthodox Catholic can skip the more tendentious essays. After all, when it comes to comments on individual books of the Bible, as distinguished from articles giving overviews of the Pentateuch or the life of Christ, there is little room for foolery. In any event, do not be put off by being unable to locate an ideal commentary, since there is no such thing.

Newer than the latest commentaries is William G. Most's *Free from All Error*.⁹ Most, known for his orthodoxy and willingness to engage modernists in verbal combat, examines the authorship, inerrancy, and historicity of Scripture. In this book, which is not a replacement for but a fine addition to a commentary, he devotes separate chapters to Genesis, the infancy narratives, apocalyptic books, and wisdom literature. He examines the historical-critical method of scriptural interpretation, the prejudices of form and redaction critics, and how we determine which books are inspired and belong in the Bible and which are not and do not.

Also worth having are two books by John Steinmueller, the three-volume *Companion to Scripture Studies*¹⁰ and *The Sword of the Spirit*.¹¹ The first volume of the *Companion* discusses inspiration, the canon of the Bible, texts and versions, and hermeneutics. It considers the history of exegesis in the ancient, medieval, and modern periods and biblical antiquities, which include sacred places (such as the temples of Solomon, Zorobabel, and Herod), sacred persons, sacred rituals, and even sacred seasons, and it closes with a

chapter on the geography of the Holy Land.

The second volume covers the Old Testament, while the third covers the New. Each book of the Bible is considered, but not in the manner of a commentary. Steinmueller does not use a verse-by-verse approach. Typically, after giving a bibliography, he presents an outline of a book, then devotes a few paragraphs to its author, origin, intended audience, and special aims. In the third volume each book of the New Testament is given more space than could be given in the second volume to each of the Old, and there is a fine analysis of the synoptic problem and a useful, if unhappily too short, life of Christ.

The Sword of the Spirit covers the meaning, inspiration, authors, and canon of the Bible, biblical theology, the history of the Bible, and conflicting views in modern biblical scholarship. It might be read before turning to a commentary or the more daunting *Companion*. Steinmueller's pages on early English versions of the Bible will be a disappointment to fundamentalists who pick up *The Sword of the Spirit*, most of them having a sense that the King James Version was the first in English (and some of them believing it was in fact the *original* version), because he shows English translations long predated the Reformation. Catholics new to the history of the Bible will benefit from this discussion, although for the full story one needs to turn to Hugh Pope's *English Versions of the Bible*,¹² which examines at greater length than one might think possible all the translations to the twentieth century.

Another handy work is Henri Daniel-Rops' *Daily Life in the Time of Jesus*.¹³ This supplement to the commentaries is an extended and readable examination of the society of first-century Palestine. Discussed are the class structure, personal cleanliness, arts and science, occupations, the Jewish family, the city of Jerusalem, and much more, in a text the cover blurb rightly calls "a masterful synthesis of the complex array of the economic, political, and cultural currents of the pivotal era of human history". It is the kind of book the apologist will want to reach for when his discussions with fundamentalists involve interpreting Scripture in light of its own time.

Fundamentalists do not argue against the Church merely from Scripture, limiting themselves to events of the first century. They also decry later Catholic "inventions" and what they consider to be the universally sorry history of the universal Church. The more knowledgeable among them bring up specific historical points—the Inquisition, the "bad Popes", abuses leading

up to the Reformation—and expect Catholics to be able to explain how such enormities could proceed from the Church Christ established.

There are two problems here. First, most of the ecclesiastical history fundamentalists know is wrong, being little more than vague prejudices mixed with scraps of pseudolearning. Few of them, though, have any reason to doubt that what has been handed down to them (part of their “tradition”, in a way) is the real story of the Catholic Church.

The second problem is that, although some of the history they have is accurate, at least in the bare sense of dates and names, they have no grasp of what that history *means*. Their basic problem, of course, is that their own religion is frozen in apostolic times. They fail to see that the true Faith may alter its appearance, although not its content, as the centuries pass, and that later events can shed light on earlier, just as the New Testament allows a deeper appreciation of the Old; and they forget, it seems, that Christianity, although not *of* the world, is certainly *in* it. From decades of refusing to examine events with a critical mind, their instincts have become antihistorical.

Fundamentalists rightly note that priestly celibacy became mandatory only in the Middle Ages, but they have no feel for the process leading up to the rule and so conclude it was instituted out of the blue. They know Constantine legalized Christianity in 313, and they have been told his Edict of Milan precipitated the rise of the Catholic Church, but they know little of the shape of Christianity in the years immediately preceding or following Constantine’s rule. They envision distinctively Catholic practices, such as auricular confession and the use of Latin, as popping up out of nowhere, and this bothers them no end—as it should, if their historical outlook were true.

The only way to overcome these stumbling blocks—and that is just what so much of Catholicism is when not understood in itself—is for the Catholic apologist to be able to take each historical question and find an answer, putting the issue in context, first showing what really happened, then integrating the facts with what his fundamentalist questioner already knows, thus giving him the broad picture. This can cause endless headaches, of course, and sometimes it is either impossible or not worth trying to accomplish, but often it is crucial.

Most fundamentalists embrace only one or two historical squabbles with gusto, and, if their confusions about them can be cleared up—and it may take very little effort to do that—they will be open to learning about the Faith.

They will then be receptive to talk about the other historical complaints they have, the ones on which they do not stake their reputations. A few fundamentalists have so many questions and know so much that is not so, that one cannot hope to satisfy them, no matter how much homework is done, no matter how many citations are given, no matter how many pages from history texts are photocopied and sent off with explanatory cover letters. A hundred matters can be settled to then grudging satisfaction, but, hydralike, two hundred more will arise. These people can be touched only by grace, not by anything the Catholic apologist can do. They revel in their confusion and would be lost if they did not have a full bag of complaints concerning the history of the Church.

Yet they are a small minority of fundamentalists, most of whom can be approached on the level of history, most of whom would welcome serious historical discussions (which is not to say, by any means, that one needs to be a certified historian to speak with them). To enter such discussions, whether on the lecture platform, in a Bible-study class, or around the cracker barrel, the Catholic needs, in addition to a thick skin, a good grounding in Church history. He does not need to have on the tip of his tongue an answer to every question, although there are a few standard complaints for which he indeed will have set replies. He needs to be able to look up answers in handy reference works, ones that are really useful for his purposes. When he tells a fundamentalist that he will get back with the answer in a few days, he needs to be able to do just that. Not to get back with an answer because one does not have on hand the right books means, to a suspicious interlocutor, that there is no answer to his charge.

Some of the best historical works are no longer in print, such as Newman Eberhardt's *A Summary of Catholic History*,¹⁴ Fernand Mourret's *A History of the Catholic Church*,¹⁵ and Henri Daniel-Rops' *History of the Church of Christ*.¹⁶ An especially promising venture is Warren Carroll's six-volume project titled *A History of Christendom*,¹⁷ At this writing incomplete, the series can be highly recommended as orthodox, temperate, detailed, and accurate. Another fine history is Philip Hughes' *History of the Church*.¹⁸ This three-volume set takes the story to the time of Luther. Hughes was unable to finish the planned fourth volume, but that does not matter much, since most questions fundamentalists have about Catholic history concern matters in the early centuries and in the Middle Ages.

Published concurrently with Hughes' three-volume set was a one-volume

abridgment, *A Popular History of the Catholic Church*.¹⁹ It carries the story to 1946, and, although pre-Reformation topics are handled more concisely than in the larger work, the book gives the reader new to Church history a surprisingly satisfying overview of events. For the first time there is a real connection between the history of the first years of the Church, as found in the New Testament, and the history one has lived through. The first century is tied to the twentieth, the intervening years no longer being a void.

Not to be overlooked is the first major historical work by a Christian, the fourth-century *Ecclesiastical History*²⁰ of Eusebius. Available with Greek and English on facing pages, it will impress on the reader better than any other ancient writing that the Catholic Church and its distinguishing elements existed from the first.

A history book deals mainly with people and actions and not so much with ideas and their development, although that necessarily plays a substantial part in any history of Catholicism. It is hard to trace doctrinal developments, no matter how many straight history texts one has access to. What is needed is an account of the history of beliefs themselves. The premier work of that kind is Joseph Tixeront's *History of Dogmas*,²¹ a three-volume set that is prime reading for the apologist. As John A. Hardon explains on the cover, Tixeront takes the basic truths of the Faith and "analyzes these truths in their historical context from the New Testament through the last of the Fathers in the eighth century. Three crucial concepts are especially demonstrated: (1) that the Catholic faith has remained essentially unchanged since the time of Christ to the present day, (2) that there nevertheless has been a marvelous development of doctrine fulfilling Christ's prophecy, 'when the spirit of truth comes He will lead you to the complete truth' (John 16:13), and (3) that this continuity and development of Christian doctrine has been possible only because of the Roman Catholic Church, of which the Bishop of Rome is the visible head."

An invaluable companion series is Johannes Quasten's *Patrology*.²² This standard reference work, in four volumes, is an introduction to the Christian authors of the early centuries. (Patrology, the study of the Fathers of the Church, of their contemporaries—both orthodox and heterodox—and of the authenticity of the works attributed to them, should be distinguished from patristics, the study of their thought, which is more the kind of thing found in Tixeront's books.) *Patrology* will give the reader a good grasp of how Christian literature developed in the early centuries, and that in turn shows the continuity of the Church and its doctrines.

William A. Jurgens' *The Faith of the Early Fathers*²³ is another three-volume set that covers the same years as does Tixeront's and somewhat more than does Quasten's—that is, from the first century through the eighth. It is a work of remarkable compression and utility and cannot be recommended highly enough.

There are available, for hundreds of dollars, English translations of early Christian literature, not just the writings of the Fathers, but also of other orthodox commentators and of heretics. These shelf-long sets are for libraries and for bookish apologists with fat wallets. Until Jurgens' anthology appeared, there was nothing convenient in size that could be had at a convenient price. The value of *The Faith of the Early Fathers* is not to be found, though, in how much shelf space or how many dollars it saves, but in its doctrinal index, which lets the reader locate at once references to the sorts of issues fundamentalists bring up. There are 2,390 quotations in the three volumes, some a few lines long, some several paragraphs, and they are cross-referenced under 1,046 doctrinal headings, which are organized much like a catechism.

For example, headings 849 through 899 deal with the Eucharist. Headings 849 through 867, which include 88 citations (some of the headings having more than a dozen), are restricted to the topic of the Real Presence, and numbers 868 through 899 cover Communion, the Mass, and liturgy and law. Heading 851, for instance, is the proposition that "Christ is really present in the Eucharist under the appearance of bread and wine". Twenty citations are given. Number 852 is that "the truth of the Real Presence is evident from the words of institution", and for that there are seven citations.

In addition to the doctrinal index there are an index of scriptural references and a detailed alphabetical index. What is more, each writer and his works are introduced in a few well-turned paragraphs. Jurgens includes helpful footnotes, covering all the hard or controverted points, and gives suggestions for further reading.

As a final handbook on doctrines, consider Ludwig Ott's *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*.²⁴ This is a true tome, but one worth obtaining. It is invaluable for the research an apologist promises to do on short notice, and ex-Catholics who are returning to the Faith through a program of good reading have said Ott's work, though intimidating at first sight, is helpful because it presents so much between two covers. Ott discusses the whole of Catholic dogma, and the value of his work lies not just in his precision and

compact explanations, but in his references. How can Catholics claim the Church was established as a visible institution? What is the basis for that? Ott covers the issue, giving references to and quotations from papal encyclicals (somewhat useful, but of course not authoritative in fundamentalists' eyes), the Bible (here is what they want), the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, and Church councils. He also gives heretical views, referring to the theories of the Spiritualist sects of the Middle Ages, to Hus, Calvin, and Luther. So it goes, with every topic.

Ott does not present a complete answer in the form fundamentalists will understand or find convincing, at least not usually, and his is certainly not the first book one would recommend to a fundamentalist beginning to learn about the Faith or to an uninstructed Catholic. But it can put the Catholic apologist on the right track, ensuring he will find all the right biblical references and enough other leads so he can build firm arguments.

Not exactly a handbook on doctrines, but an extended commentary on their growth, is the premier theological work in English, John Henry Newman's *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*.²⁵ While not the first book the apologist will want for his library, it is one he should read early on so he can understand how an examination of the history of doctrines can lead one to the Church. Newman was an Anglican with strong Catholic sympathies when he began writing this book, and as he finished it he converted. One might say he wrote himself into the Church. What his research demonstrated to him was that the Catholic Church, contrary to what he had been brought up to believe, had not added dogmas at random; there were no Catholic "inventions", but maturations of the original deposit of faith.

If one were to select a single book as a guide to the art of apologetics, it would be Frank Sheed's *Catholic Evidence Training Outlines*.²⁶ This marvelous work was used to train members of the Catholic Evidence Guild, which Sheed and his wife, Maisie Ward, guided more than half a century ago. At one time the Guild had six hundred street-corner preachers in England alone. Street-corner preaching, of course, is now passe: anyone talking religion from a soapbox in the park is presumed to be a bit off—and usually is. Besides, the audiences have changed.

In the twenties, thirties, and forties, one could stand up in Hyde Park, announce that papal infallibility was the topic, and be sure of gathering a crowd that included, along with the usual assortment of cranks and habitual hecklers, a large number of intelligent listeners. However popular street-

corner preaching once was in England, its popularity here was never great, and in both places it has nearly disappeared. But no matter. The lessons that Sheed taught his Guild members two generations ago are just the lessons serious Catholic apologists need to learn today, and they can be used effectively in one-on-one talks or in group discussions.

Catholic Evidence Training Outlines went through several editions, rapidly improving with age and experience. The book began as a collection of short lesson plans used in the weekly courses Guild members had to take (and pass, after rigorous tests) before being allowed to speak publicly. Opposite the title page is a boxed warning that “the speakers are again reminded that these are not street-corner outlines but class outlines to prepare them for the street corner”, and that is just what the bulk of the book is.

The first forty pages are devoted to the theory of street-corner apologetics (perfectly applicable still, even if the discussion takes place in the home, on the steps outside of church, or in print, rather than on a lecture platform) and to how Guild training should be organized. Sheed had it down to a science, and it shows in his writing.

Then come two dozen short chapters, if they can be called chapters—the course for junior speakers, people who were allowed to speak on only the basics. Twice as many chapters cover topics for senior speakers. Each chapter consists of a narrowly drawn topic, the key points schematically described; recommended readings; and true-to-life sample questions. The student who could not answer each question with aplomb (and they are tough) could not graduate from one subject to the next. It was common to find hundreds of Guild members who were allowed to talk on only a handful of topics. It took years of regular training to become a senior speaker or, higher still, a chairman, the person who acted as moderator on the platform and who was considered competent to handle any question the audience might pose.

As a rule, several people would speak, taking turns. A senior speaker might start off, to get the crowd warmed up. Then a junior speaker or two would give ten-minute talks on some of the basics of the Faith. Then, perhaps, another senior speaker would have as his topic a particularly sticky or confusing issue, such as the Inquisition or the Mystical Body of Christ. Questions could come from the crowd at any time, and heckling was common. It was the chairman’s job to get the speakers up and (just as important) down in a timely manner, and he would take over if a speaker was getting in over his head or was losing control of the crowd.

All in all, it was a thorough, militarylike system, one that worked remarkably well in bringing converts to the Church and in developing the faith of the Catholics who participated. The scheme of operation can be appreciated by reading the nine “technical lectures” that are sandwiched between the junior and senior courses. They are on such things as “Relating to the Mind of the Listeners”, “How to Handle a Crowd”, and dealing with “Questions and Interjections”. At the end of the book, in addition to an appendix comprised of six specialized lectures, is a general survey of key points.²⁷

If *Catholic Evidence Training Outlines* is the best source book to have, a good runner-up, and one that is easily obtained, is *Radio Replies*,²⁸ Leslie Rumble and Charles M. Carty’s three-volume set. The books contain 4,374 questions posed to the “Radio Priests” during their many years on the air in the United States and Australia. The questions are tough because they are authentic. Rumble and Carty took the questions as they were sent in and prepared complete, readable, and pointed responses. Virtually every question a fundamentalist could ask will be found in *Radio Replies*. What is more, virtually every question a nonreligious skeptic or a confused Catholic could ask will be found there.

True, these books are old, the last appearing in 1942, but it is uncanny how useful they are now. Only a handful of the hundreds of topics considered are truly dated, and of course some of the terminology has changed. Those are minor points. Anyone not prejudiced against what was written the day before yesterday will profit immensely from *Radio Replies*. These might well be the most-thumbed books on an apologist’s shelf, the ones he turns to first when he promises to find an answer to a question that is puzzling a prospective convert to (or from) Catholicism.

Fulton Sheen began his preface to *Radio Replies* by noting that “there are not over a hundred people in the United States who hate the Catholic Church. There are millions, however, who hate what they wrongly believe to be the Catholic Church—which is quite a different thing. . . . If, then, the hatred of the Church is founded on erroneous beliefs, it follows that [the] basic need of the day is instruction.”²⁹ And *Radio Replies* is certainly a gem of an instructional aid. Sometimes Rumble and Carty cover a topic completely, giving the reader far more than he needs to satisfy his curiosity. At other times they give, if not a full treatment, at least enough that the reader knows where to look for detailed information.

There are other works by Frank Sheed that deserve mention, because he probably had a firmer grasp of practical apologetics than any other recent Catholic writer. His *Theology and Sanity*³⁰ was originally published in 1946; the revised paperback edition features a fascinating preface in which Sheed gives some history of his street-corner apostolate and pokes fun at people who siphon the reality out of the Resurrection and Ascension, “leaving for our nourishment only the spiritual meaning of incidents all the truer for never having happened!” He explains:

When I wrote *Theology and Sanity*, I had been teaching the Faith under the open sky for a quarter of a century. . . . Every paragraph had been tried out on forty or fifty outdoor audiences before I got it down on paper. Listeners were free to walk away the moment they were bored—I tried to learn from their boredom. If they stayed, they could utter their reactions—anything from agreement to intelligent criticism to mockery to blasphemy—with a freedom which speakers who knew only the ivory tower of pulpit or lecture hall found unnerving. It was unbelievably educative. I doubt if there was any objection against the Faith in all the centuries that was not hurled at us. And, unlike the great theologians whose writings had helped to form our minds, we could not go off and think about the objection for a year or two, then write an article. We had to cope—somehow—there and then. The crowd was truly co-author of the book; not a sentence that has not been reshaped by them. This really is *aggiornamento*—doctrines restated, not to be made more acceptable but more comprehensible, related to the questions people were actually asking, to the needs they were actually feeling, in the language they actually spoke.³¹

This book presents to the reader a fully rounded and accurate representation of the Catholic view of reality, a view remarkably unlike that held by fundamentalists. Even most Catholics have a weak appreciation of it, and it is something that needs to be well comprehended by anyone wanting to pass along the Faith. The title *Theology and Sanity* comes from Sheed’s notion that to be truly sane is to take into account the whole of reality as it really is. To disbelieve in the supernatural (as even many Catholics, *in practice*, seem to do), is to live other than sanely, much as a physician who disbelieves in bacteria lives other than sanely.

Sheed begins with a fine explanation of the Trinity, which is usually thought of as a dry topic but which his outdoor crowds found the most captivating. The next section looks at angels and men, the Fall, the Redemption, and the Mystical Body of Christ, and it gives perhaps the best popular account of life after death to be found anywhere. The last section explains why we need to be habituated to reality, how our insufficiencies are made up for by the sufficiencies of the Church, and how “sanity points toward sanctity”.³²

It is not enough to have the Faith firmly in hand and to be able to answer questions with, a glib tongue. There is a tendency for religion to seem dry, Scholastic in the bad sense. This is easily overcome if one has a deep appreciation of the life of Christ. The New Testament, of course, is the place to turn, but reading it alone is insufficient unless one is graced with considerable powers of synthesis. Help is needed to see the larger picture, and there are several books that do a fine job in that.

Again, one is by Sheed. It is *To Know Christ Jesus*.³³ The opening line of the foreword says, “This book is not a Life of Christ.” Sheed means there is too much we do not know about Jesus, at least regarding his everyday activities (we know, for instance, only one event between his infancy and the start of his ministry), for this to be a regular biography. What Sheed proposes to do, and what he does admirably, is introduce us to Someone through the Gospels. His book is really a preparation for reading the Gospels. Things are put in the right sequence, in the right perspective, and then, when one turns back to the sacred writings, there is a new and deeper understanding. The Gospels are in many ways so haphazard in organization, so confusing in terminology, that we need a road map to get around them and to know what we have seen. It is a bit like visiting a large city. You can drive around all day and still have no feel for it; but study a map, see where the main buildings are and how the highways intersect, and you can get back in the car and, for the first time, really appreciate what is there.

Similar to Sheed’s book is Fulton Sheen’s *Life of Christ*,³⁴ his most famous work. Written in response to an unnamed trial that afflicted him for years, it centers on what struck him as the main point of Christ’s life, that Christ did not come into the world to live but to die. “Unless there is a Good Friday in our lives there will never be an Easter Sunday. The Cross is the condition of the empty tomb, and the crown of thorns is the preface to the halo of light.”³⁵ Sheen takes the reader through our Lord’s life chronologically, as might be expected, and he punctuates his recounting of what we think should be a familiar tale with astonishing insights. This book is every bit as good as Sheed’s in giving the prospective apologist the indispensable overview.

Not to be overlooked is Romano Guardini’s *The Lord*,³⁶ which may be the epitome of the genre. Guardini begins by noting that neither a psychology nor a biography of Jesus is possible;—the divine is not to be comprehended by finite minds.

All we can do is ponder such words as: “And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and grace before God and men” (Luke 2:52), or the passage in the Epistle to the Galatians which describes him as one “in the fullness of time,” ripening to maturity deeply conscious of the history about him. . . . We can only reverently pause before this or that word or act, ready to learn, adore, obey.

Guardini offers “the spiritual commentaries of some four years of Sunday services undertaken with the sole purpose of obeying as well as possible the Lord’s command to proclaim him, his message, and his works”.³⁷ It is generally agreed that Guardini fulfilled his task well.

Gathering the books mentioned in this chapter will be neither convenient nor inexpensive. While only someone wanting to go into apologetics on a more or less formal basis (or a bookworm) will acquire all the books, any Catholic who wants to develop his own faith so he can speak effectively with fundamentalists will get most of them. The fundamentalist problem is not a small one, and the problems fundamentalists have with Catholicism are not few. There is no one book that will arm Catholics adequately for the task, and it will take months to read what *must* be read. But the homework needs to be done—for oneself, for one’s family and friends who might be tempted toward fundamentalism, and for fundamentalists, both ex-Catholic and never-Catholic, who are thinking of coming home to Rome or who, if they find their questions answered, might start thinking that way.

Chapter 26

Afterword

“There is something very gallant about these Literalists”, wrote Hilaire Belloc nearly a lifetime ago. The people known today as fundamentalists

never retreated, they never surrendered, they were incapable of maneuver, and the few that remain will die where they stand rather give way a foot. Their simplicity sometimes has a holy quality about it. . . . Most of us, asked to make a guess, would say that in fifty years no odd Literalist could still be found crawling on the earth. Do not be too sure. Our children may live to see a revival of this type in some strange land.¹

Writing only five years after the Scopes Trial, Belloc naturally emphasized fundamentalism’s attitude toward the first eleven chapters of Genesis. Perhaps that was all he knew about this brand of Christianity. Besides, it was mainly an American phenomenon, and the real battles were being fought elsewhere. Still, he perceived fundamentalists’ tenacity. Whatever they stood for, they stood for it solidly, and he was right to imagine a revival of fundamentalism “in some strange land”, such as the one across the Atlantic from England. He had no way of knowing, of course, of the travails the Catholic Church would undergo during the next half century. He could not imagine a resurgence of modernism, which seemed quite dead in 1930, or how, in two generations, Catholics would be woefully uninstructed in their religion, easy marks for sects that offered simple answers for the spiritual problems of an age that had ceased to be Christian in any real sense. He could not know of the hollowness so many Catholics would feel—good people who one day woke to realize that their bonds to the Church were tenuous and that they might happily go wherever the Bible, as interpreted by fundamentalists, seemed to lead them.

Someone who understands all this is Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger. The Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has said that

[o]ur catechesis . . . must unmask the point on which these new “missionaries” harp: the impression, namely, that Scripture is to be read in a “literal” sense, while Catholics assertedly have weakened or forgotten it. This *literalness* often signifies a betrayal of *fidelity*. The isolation

of single sentences and verses is misleading and loses sight of the whole. Read as a whole, the Bible is really “Catholic”, But this must first be shown through a catechetical instruction that would rehabilitate the faithful to a reading of sacred Scripture in and with the Church.²

The key, then, is instruction—and not just in the proper approach to the Bible, but to all aspects of the Faith. Almost without exception, Catholics returning to the Church from fundamentalism report they never would have left had they been well catechized. Had they known what the Catholic religion really was, they would have been able to deal with awkward questions thrown their way. Fundamentalist neighborliness, however freely accepted, would not have resulted in the acceptance of fundamentalist doctrines.

Many Catholics think people are attracted to fundamentalism only for social and emotional reasons; since such suasions cannot be overcome by syllogisms, they see no point in discussing doctrines. Catholics who have returned to the Church from fundamentalism put the emphasis differently. They admit that frustration with the Church and its officials and members may have played a part in their conversion to fundamentalism, and they acknowledge that personal problems, such as loneliness, may have made fundamentalism (or at least fundamentalists) look attractive at the beginning. Yet they almost universally declare that what kept them out of the Catholic Church was doctrine. Whatever their initial reasons for examining fundamentalism, they stayed away from Catholicism because they decided its teachings were untrue.

They also reconverted for doctrinal reasons. They came to understand that fundamentalism contains much religious truth, but also much error, and the fullness of religious truth, they learned, can only be found at Rome. They came to believe in the Catholic religion again because someone took the time to tell them what the Church really stands for or because, fortuitously, they stumbled on the facts for themselves.

The committed fundamentalist, who is often a former Catholic, *knows* the Catholic religion is wrong and thinks he can prove it from the Bible. The first step is to demonstrate to him that much of what he knows simply is not so. Emotional barriers will be overcome later, and they will fall as he realizes he has not been told the whole story. Glad-handing alone will not suffice; in fact, it is often counterproductive. The fundamentalist *wants* Catholics to discuss doctrines, and when they do not—when they deliberately shy away from even trying—he concludes their doctrinal beliefs are groundless, and the

indictment against Rome seems rock solid.

Although it is essential to treat fundamentalists with respect and love (especially difficult for those too quick with jabs, whether verbal or pugilistic), that is hardly sufficient and will resolve no confusions and produce no converts. Fundamentalists must be approached on the level of doctrine, which means making biblical (but also historical and other) arguments. It has been on the level of doctrine that the fundamentalist challenge to the Church has found its power. This power lies not in the objective truth of the fundamentalist position, which is a mixture of truth and error, but in fundamentalism's insistence that truth really matters, that one's salvation depends on accepting God's truth in its entirety, in all its consequences. People find this intellectually challenging and immensely attractive—and not just attractive, but compelling, for who says A must say B.

If Catholics expect to answer fundamentalism, they will have to answer it not just with charity—necessary, although hardly sufficient—but with doctrine. They will have to appeal not just to the heart but to the intellect. After all, it is the truth that sets us free.

Appendix

Materials explaining and defending Catholic beliefs, history, and practices may be obtained from Catholic Answers, Inc., a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization run by Catholic laymen. Its director is the author of this book. Available are a monthly publication titled *Catholic Answers*, tracts (in English or Spanish) on a wide variety of topics, and audiocassette tapes of debates and lectures. Write for a catalogue, sending a self-addressed, stamped envelope to:

Catholic Answers

P. O. Box 17181

San Diego, California 92117

Anti-Catholic literature may be obtained on request or for a small donation from the following organizations. When writing, ask for a catalogue and samples of literature.

1. Chick Publications
P. O. Box 662
Chino, California 91710
2. Christians Evangelizing Catholics
P.O. Box 24758
San Jose, California 95154
3. The Conversion Center
Drawer V
Havertown, Pennsylvania 19083
4. Mission to Catholics International
P. O. Box 19280

San Diego, California 92119

5. Radio Bible Class

Grand Rapids, Michigan 49555-0001

6. Jimmy Swaggart Ministries

P. O. Box 2550

Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70821-2550

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Hugh Pope, *English Versions of the Bible* (St. Louis: Herder, 1952).

_____ *The Layman's New Testament* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1934).

Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* (Westminster, Md.: Christian Classics, 1983).

Leslie Rumble and Charles M. Carty, *Radio Replies* (Rockford, Ill.: TAN Books, 1979).

Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

Frank Sheed, *Theology and Sanity* (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, 1978).

_____ *To Know Christ Jesus* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Servant Books, 1980).

_____ and Maisie Ward, *Catholic Evidence Training Outlines* (London, Sheed and Ward, 1948).

John Steinmueller, *A Companion to Scripture Studies* (New York: Joseph F. Wagner, 1969).

_____ *The Sword of the Spirit* (Waco, Tex.: Stella Maris Books, 1978).

Jimmy Swaggart, *Catholicism & Christianity* (Baton Rouge: Jimmy Swaggart Ministries, 1986).

Joseph Tixeront, *History of Dogmas* (Westminster, Md.: Christian Classics, 1984).

John Evangelist Walsh, *The Bones of St. Peter* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1982).

Ralph Woodrow, *Babylon Mystery Religion* (Riverside, Calif.: Ralph Woodrow Evangelistic Association, 1966).

Joseph Zacchello, *Secrets of Romanism* (Neptune, N.J.: Loizeaux Brothers, 1948).

NOTES

CHAPTER 1

¹ Standard works on fundamentalism include James Barr, *Fundamentalism* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977); Gabriel Hebert, *Fundamentalism and the Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1957); George Marsden, ed., *Evangelicalism and Modern America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984); Jerry Falwell, *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon* (New York: Doubleday, 1981); Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970). [Back to Text.](#)

² See p. 19, below. [Back to Text.](#)

³ Many “professional anti-Catholics” converted from Catholicism, a fact that leads some critics of fundamentalism to conclude, wrongly, that anti-Catholicism is a manifestation not of doctrinal differences, but of emotional traumas in the converted. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Fundamentalism is restricted mainly to English-speaking countries but it is spreading rapidly elsewhere. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Hebert, *Fundamentalism*, 17. [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ Hebert, *Fundamentalism*, 17. [Back to Text.](#)

⁷ Hebert, *Fundamentalism*, 19. [Back to Text.](#)

⁸ Hebert, *Fundamentalism*, 17. [Back to Text.](#)

⁹ Edward Dobson, “Fundamentalism—Its Roots”, *New Catholic World*, January / February 1985, 5. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁰ Dobson, “Fundamentalism”, 9. [Back to Text.](#)

¹¹ Hebert, *Fundamentalism*, 9. [Back to Text.](#)

¹² Dobson, “Fundamentalism”, 7. [Back to Text.](#)

¹³ As an example of the Catholic apologetic, see Arnold Lunn, *The Third Day* (London: Burns Oates, 1945). [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁴ A. C. Dixon et al., eds., *The Fundamentals* (Los Angeles: Bible Institute of Los Angeles, 1909), 2:239. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁵ There are innumerable variations on the theme, with many

fundamentalists coming close to mimicking William Miller both in his penchant for setting dates for the Second Coming (he guessed 1843, later 1844) and in his accuracy as a prognosticator. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁶ Some fundamentalists read others right out of Christianity for occasionally throwing the dice or bending the arm, although the Bible nowhere condemns gambling with one's superfluous wealth or drinking spirits in moderation. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁷ Peggy L. Shriver, "Guardians of Fundamentalism's Fortress", *New Catholic World*, January/February 1985, 15. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁸ Loraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1962), 13-18. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 2

¹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, x. [Back to Text.](#)

² Boettner, *Catholicism*, 118. [Back to Text.](#)

³ The books by Catholics include James Gibbons, *Faith of Our Fathers* (Baltimore: John Murphy, 1876); John A. O'Brien, *The Faith of Millions* (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, 1938); John A. Ryan and Francis J. Boland, *Catholic Principles of Politics* (New York: Macmillan, 1949); Philip Hughes, *A Popular History of the Catholic Church* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1949); Glenn D. Kittler, *The Papal Princes* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1960); Martin J. Scott, *Things Catholics Are Asked About* (New York: Kenedy, 1927); Fulton J. Sheen, *Peace of Soul* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1940). [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Most works that present the Catholic Faith accurately do not anticipate fundamentalist attacks and so hardly can be faulted for not answering questions they were not intended to answer. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 127. Hughes is quoted as saying that Gregory the Great "is the founder of the papal monarchy", and Boettner says Hughes is admitting that Gregory was the first Pope, which is the standard fundamentalist position. Actually, Hughes is referring to the establishment of the papal political monarchy, not to the establishment of the papacy—something clear if the few sentences quoted from him are read in context. [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ Some of his books, such as *The Priest, the Woman, and the Confessional*, seem never to have gone out of print. There is always a

market for the lurid. [Back to Text.](#)

⁷ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 244-45. [Back to Text.](#)

⁸ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Strossmayer, Joseph Georg”, 14:316. [Back to Text.](#)

⁹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 235. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁰ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 235. [Back to Text.](#)

¹¹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 88. [Back to Text.](#)

¹² Boettner, *Catholicism*, 88. [Back to Text.](#)

¹³ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 7-9. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁴ The ellipses appear in Boettner’s list of “inventions”. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁵ Tertullian, *De corona* 3,2. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁶ The first theologian of note to oppose the doctrine of transubstantiation was Berengarius of Tours (c. 1000-1088), [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁷ Origen, *In Leviticum homiliae* 2, 4. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁸ Cyprian, *De lapsis* 28. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁹ Aphraates, *Demonstrationes* 7,3. [Back to Text.](#)

²⁰ James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson* (Everyman’s Library), 1:376. [Back to Text.](#)

²¹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 185. [Back to Text.](#)

²² Boettner, *Catholicism*, 189. [Back to Text.](#)

²³ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 136. [Back to Text.](#)

²⁴ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 302. [Back to Text.](#)

²⁵ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 53. [Back to Text.](#)

²⁶ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 176. [Back to Text.](#)

²⁷ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 163. [Back to Text.](#)

²⁸ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 151. [Back to Text.](#)

²⁹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 184. [Back to Text.](#)

³⁰ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 59. [Back to Text.](#)

³¹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 215. [Back to Text.](#)

³² Boettner, *Catholicism*, 323. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 3

¹ The pastor of the church told a visitor, “We bought this place from the jews at a good price”, beating them at their own game, he apparently

thought. [Back to Text.](#)

² The books include titles by Avro Manhattan, an inveterate anti-Catholic and author of *The Vatican-Moscow-Washington Alliance*, *The Vatican Billions*, *Catholic Power Today*, *Murder in the Vatican*, and *Vatican Imperialism in the 20th Century*. [Back to Text.](#)

³ The last year for which Mission to Catholics International published figures was 1979. In its January 1980 newsletter, it reported that during the previous year more than 250,000 books, tracts, and tapes were distributed. At that time most of the organization's work was restricted to the seven westernmost states. It has since expanded throughout the continental United States and into Europe. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Although leaders of anti-Catholic groups regularly deny any advocacy of trespassing, harassment, or vandalism, their rhetoric is so strident that their more zealous followers draw the necessary inferences. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Bartholomew F. Brewer, *Pilgrimage from Rome* (Greenville, S.C.: Boh Jones University Press, 1982). [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ In a tract titled *The Conversion of a Catholic Priest*. [Back to Text.](#)

⁷ Bernard Berenson, *Rumor and Reflection* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1952), 43. [Back to Text.](#)

⁸ C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* (Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 1949), 56. [Back to Text.](#)

⁹ *Challenger* (San Diego: Mission to Catholics International), June 1983. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁰ Given in conferences at a retreat for the priests of the Archdiocese of Washington in 1974. [Back to Text.](#)

¹¹ *Challenger*, April 1985. [Back to Text.](#)

¹² *Challenger*, February 1985. [Back to Text.](#)

¹³ Complaints from Catholics are printed occasionally, most of them badly reasoned or entirely unreasoned; they serve as useful straw men. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁴ Including a talk, appropriately enough, in West Babylon, New York. *Challenger*, March 1985. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁵ When a verse's plain or primary sense argues in favor of the Catholic position, anti-Catholics ignore that sense and base their attack on a less-likely sense, often not admitting that their case is not open and shut. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁶ Frank Sheed and Maisie ward, *Catholic Evidence Training Outlines*, 4th ed. (London: Sheed and Ward, 1948), 232. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 4

¹ One naturally would like to see how local newspapers characterized the incident. [Back to Text.](#)

² The passage actually reads this way: “The spirit of old Rome has risen again in its former place, and has evidenced its identity by its works. It has possessed the Church there planted, as an evil spirit might seize the demoniacs of primitive times, and makes her speak words which are not her own. In the corrupt Papal system we have the very cruelty, the craft, and the ambition of the Republic; its cruelty in its unsparing sacrifice of the happiness and virtue of individuals to a phantom of public expediency, in its forced celibacy within, and its persecutions without; its craft in its falsehoods, its deceitful deeds and lying wonders; and its grasping ambition in the very structure of its polity, in its assumption of universal dominion: old Rome is still alive; no where have its eagles lighted, but it still claims the sovereignty under another pretence. The Roman Church I will not blame, but pity—she is, as I have said, spellbound, as if by an evil spirit; she is in thralldom.” John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1974), 60. [Back to Text.](#)

³ The disinclination of the Conversion Center to locate more recent photographs parallels its disinclination to discover what the Catholic Church really believes. It is more convenient to use photographs on hand, as it is more convenient to use anti-Catholic arguments handed down from father to son. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ The great advantage possessed by anti-Catholics is that so few of their targets have the stamina to compose the necessary replies, and thus many charges go unanswered. The claims made about the papacy will be answered in later chapters of this book. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ T. S. Eliot, “Choruses from ‘The Rock’ ”, *The Complete Poems and Plays 1909—1950* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1971), 108. [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ Hilaire Belloc, “Heroic Poem in Praise of Wine”, *Complete Verse*, ed. W. N. Roughead (London: Duckworth, 1970), 80. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 5

¹ January 1985 issue. [Back to Text.](#)

² November 1984 issue. [Back to Text.](#)

³ *Pro (Eternal) Life*, [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Ironically, many ex-fundamentalists depict fundamentalism as a cult, complete with “brainwashing”, but it is difficult to locate ex-Catholics who consider Catholicism a cult in the same sense. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Even John Foxe, author of the decidedly anti-Catholic *Book of Martyrs* (1563), denied this. He wrote, “If histories be well examined we shall find both before the Conquest and after, as well before John Wickliffe was born as since, the whole body of the Scriptures was by sundry men translated into our country tongue.” Hugh Pope, *English Versions of the Bible* (St. Louis: Herder, 1952), 63. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 6

¹ Jimmy Swaggart, “Startling Incidents and Amazing Answers to Prayer”, *The Evangelist*, July 1985, 45. [Back to Text.](#)

² Swaggart is also a singer and claims that his income comes strictly from record sales. [Back to Text.](#)

³ Jerry Falweil reports that thirty percent of *his* support comes from Catholics, but Swaggart’s is probably less. Falweil projects a more refined, urban image—most Catholics in America have urban backgrounds, not rural—and does not collapse into anti-Catholicism the way Swaggart does. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Jimmy Swaggart, *Catholicism & Christianity* (Baton Rouge: Jimmy Swaggart Ministries, 1986). [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Although many fundamentalists study Greek, in order to read the New Testament in the language of its composition, leading anti-Catholics are, as a rule, remarkably deficient in Greek and often base their arguments on elementary misunderstandings of the language. [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ John Evangelist Walsh, *The Bones of St. Peter* (Garden City, N.Y.: Double-day, 1982). [Back to Text.](#)

⁷ William A. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1970). [Back to Text.](#)

⁸ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, viii. [Back to Text.](#)

- ⁹ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 206. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁰ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 103. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹¹ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 12. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹² Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 60. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹³ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 61. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁴ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 64. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁵ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 83. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁶ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 88. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁷ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 159-163. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁸ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 200. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁹ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 221, One such book is Peter M. J. Stravinskias, *The Catholic Response* (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, 1985), which Swaggart lists as a newspaper article. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²⁰ One such page citation is to Newman, *Essay*, which is called in the text *The Development of the Christian Religion*. Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 164. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²¹ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 36. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²² Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 200. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²³ Swaggart, *Catholicism*, 53-54. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²⁴ Barbara Nauer, "Catholic Calls Swaggart 'Holy Scourge' ", *Baton Rouge Morning Advocate*, 15 February 1985, 10A. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 7

- ¹ Last Days Ministries sends to inquirers a statement issued by Melody Green, Keith Green's widow. She explains the *Catholic Chronicles* have been withdrawn from distribution because "[w]e are aware of Catholics who have been wounded by these tracts. We are also aware of others who have adopted a critical, self-righteous attitude toward Catholics." [Back to Text.](#)
- ² Whittaker Chambers, *Witness* (New York: Random House, 1952), 14. [Back to Text.](#)
- ³ *Lumen Gentium*, 8. [Back to Text.](#)
- ⁴ Boettner, *Catholicism*, xii. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 8

¹ Jack Chick, *Smokescreens* (Chino, Calif.: Chick Publications, 1983), 5. [Back to Text.](#)

² Gary Metz, “Jack Chick’s Anti-Catholic Comic Book Is Exposed as a Fraud”, *Christianity Today*, 13 March 1981. [Back to Text.](#)

³ Information on Rivera is available from the Catholic League, 1100 West Wells Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53233. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Chick, *Smokescreens*, 4-5. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Chick, *Smokescreens*, 64. [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ Tony Alamo, going Chick and Rivera one better, claims the Vatican controls all the major news media. [Back to Text.](#)

⁷ Chick, *Smokescreens*, 76-79. [Back to Text.](#)

⁸ Chick, *Smokescreens*, 88. [Back to Text.](#)

⁹ Chick, *Smokescreens*, 92. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 9

¹ See Paul Cardinal Taguchi, “The Study of Sacred Scripture”, reprinted in John Steinmueller, *The Sword of the Spirit* (Waco, Tex.: Stella Maris, 1978), 87-108. [Back to Text.](#)

² Curiously enough, so do exegetes of the historico-critical school, many of whom refuse to consider evidence extrinsic to the Bible when developing their theories. [Back to Text.](#)

³ Ronald Knox, *In Soft Garments* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1942), 138. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Quoted in Lunn, *Third Day*, 28. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Arnold Lunn and C. E. M. Joad, *Is Christianity True?* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1933), 33-34. [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ See John Henry Newman’s discussion of this point in his *Discussions and Arguments on Various Subjects* (London, 1891), 366. [Back to Text.](#)

⁷ John Henry Newman, *On the Inspiration of Scripture*, ed. J. Derek Holmes and Robert Murray (Washington: Corpus Books, 1967), in. [Back to Text.](#)

⁸ Newman, *Inspiration*, 10-11, [Back to Text.](#)

⁹ Newman, *Inspiration*, 51. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁰ Ronald Knox and Arnold Lunn, *Difficulties* (London: Eyre &

Spottiswoode, 1952), 109. [Back to Text.](#)

¹¹ Amy Wallace, David Wallechinsky, and Irving Wallace, *People's Almanac* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1975), 1339. [Back to Text.](#)

¹² William G. Most, *Free from All Error* (Libertyville, 111.: Franciscan Marytown Press, 1985), 9-11. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 10

¹ *Dei Verbum*, 9. [Back to Text.](#)

² Newman, *Inspiration*, 131n. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 11

¹ Gregory I (the Great), *In Ezechielem homiliae* 2, 4, 12. [Back to Text.](#)

² This refers to general revelation, which is to be believed by all. Private revelations have been given since apostolic times—Fatima is a modern example—but belief in particular private revelations is not necessary for salvation and is not incumbent on the faithful. [Back to Text.](#)

³ Vincent of Lerins, *Commonitoria* 23, 28. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ *Dei verbum*, 8. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* II, 1, 7. [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolyatm*, 2, 15. [Back to Text.](#)

⁷ The Semi-Arians having argued there was no important distinction between the two terms, which differ in spelling by only the smallest Greek letter, we have had preserved for us the saying that “there isn’t an iota of difference” between two closely related things. In fact, the distinction between *homoousios* and *homoiousios* was crucial. [Back to Text.](#)

⁸ Bill Jackson, *A Christian's Guide to Roman Catholicism* (Manteca, Calif.: Christians Evangelizing Catholics, n.d.), sec. 88. [Back to Text.](#)

⁹ Joseph Tixeront, *History of Dogmas* (Westminster, Md.: Christian Classics, 1984), 1:7. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁰ Frank Sheed, *Theology and Sanity* (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, 1978), 12. [Back to Text.](#)

¹¹ From his tract *What about Christmas?* [Back to Text.](#)

¹² Newman, *Essay*, 369, Few fundamentalists complain that the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles coincided with a Canaanite vintage festival, much as Christmas did with the festival of Sol Invictus. Consistency has never been

fundamentalism's strong suit. [Back to Text.](#)

¹³ From the March / April 1985 issue of *The Trinity Review*, the newsletter of the Trinity Foundation. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁴ Newman, *Essay*, 27-28. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 12

¹ Newman, *Essay*, 369. [Back to Text.](#)

² Boettner, *Catholicism*, 11. [Back to Text.](#)

³ Ralph Woodrow, *Babylon Mystery Religion* (Riverside, Calif.: Ralph Woodrow Evangelistic Association, 1966), 44. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Woodrow, *Babylon*, 130. Woodrow forgets that Scripture uses the sun image for the Lord: "But unto you that fear my name, the Sun of justice shall arise, and health in his wings: and you shall go forth, and shall leap like calves of the herd. And you shall trample down the wicked when they shall be ashes under the sole of your feet in the day that I do this, saith the Lord of hosts" (Malachi 3:20-21). [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Woodrow, *Babylon*, 130-131. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 13

¹ Kenneth E. Hagin, *The New Birth* (Tulsa, Okla.: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, 1983), 2-3. [Back to Text.](#)

² This seems to hold true for prisoners. Catholic inmates report that many of their fellows are attracted to fundamentalism because the "born-again" experience lets them avoid atoning for their sins. [Back to Text.](#)

³ Distributed by the Bible Baptist Church of Nashua, New Hampshire. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Ronald Knox, *St. Paul's Gospel* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1950), 60. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ *Can Anyone Really Know for Sure?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Radio Bible Class, 1985), 4, 20-21. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 14

¹ Origen, *Commentarii in Romanes* 5, 9. [Back to Text.](#)

² John Chrysostom, *Catechises ad illuminandos* Apud Aug., Contra Iul. 1, 6, 21. [Back to Text.](#)

³ Cyprian, *Epistulae* 64 (59), 2, [Back to Text](#).

CHAPTER 15

¹ This was one of only two times we are told that God breathed on man, the other being when he made man a living soul (Gen 2:7). It emphasizes how important the establishment of the sacrament of penance was. [Back to Text](#).

² Boettner, *Catholicism*, 8. [Back to Text](#).

³ Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 1, 13, 5. [Back to Text](#).

⁴ Origen, *In Psalmos homiliae* 2, 6. [Back to Text](#).

⁵ Cyprian, *De lapsis* 28. [Back to Text](#).

⁶ Aphraates, *Demonstrationes* 7, 3. [Back to Text](#).

⁷ Cyprian, *De lapsis* 28. [Back to Text](#).

⁸ Ambrose, *De paenitentia* 1, 2, 7. [Back to Text](#).

⁹ Leo I (the Great), *Epistulae* 108, 3. [Back to Text](#).

¹⁰ *The Forgiveness of Sins*, [Back to Text](#).

CHAPTER 16

¹ Boswell, *Johnson*, 1:376-77. [Back to Text](#).

² Augustine, *Decivitate Dei* 21, 13. [Back to Text](#).

³ Fundamentalists do not accept the inspiration of 2 Maccabees, of course, but they must admit it reflects the religious views of Jews shortly before New Testament times. [Back to Text](#).

⁴ Sandy Carson, "Is Purgatory Real?" *The Evangelist*, July 1984, 33. [Back to Text](#).

⁵ See the footnote to Colossians 1:24 in Knox's translation of the New Testament. [Back to Text](#).

CHAPTER 17

¹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 117. [Back to Text](#).

² Eusebius Pamphilius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 2, 15, 4. [Back to Text](#).

³ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 120. [Back to Text](#).

⁴ William A. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1970), 421. [Back to Text](#).

- ⁵ Fragment in Eusebius Pamphilius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 2, 25, 8. [Back to Text.](#)
- ⁶ Tertullian, *De praescriptione haereticorum* 36, 1. [Back to Text.](#)
- ⁷ Tertullian, *De praescriptione haereticorum*, 32, 2. [Back to Text.](#)
- ⁸ John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 327-47 passim. [Back to Text.](#)
- ⁹ Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistula ad Romanes* 4, 3. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁰ Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 3, 3, 3. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹¹ Fragment in Eusebius Pamphilius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 6, 14, 1. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹² Peter of Alexandria, *Depaenkenia* canon 9, [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹³ Lactantius, *De mortibus penecutorum* 2, 5. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁴ Eusebius Pamphilius, *Chronican* ad an. Dom. 4.2, ad an. Dom. 68. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁵ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 118. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁶ Walsh, *Bones*. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁷ For an account of the locale, see Stanley L. Jaki, *And on This Rock* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Ave Maria, 1978), 21-55 passim. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁸ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 106. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 106. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²⁰ Papias, *De expositione oracularum Dominicomm*, fragment in Eusebius Pamphilius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 3, 39, 14. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²¹ G. K. Chesterton, *Heretics* (London: Bodley Head, 1910), 67. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²² Henry T. Hudson, *Papal Power* (Welwyn, England: Evangelical, 1981). [Back to Text.](#)
- ²³ Hudson, *Power*, 2, [Back to Text.](#)
- ²⁴ Hudson, *Power*, 21, n. 2. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²⁵ Hudson, *Power*, 21, n. 3. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 18

- ¹ *Lumen Gentium*, 25. [Back to Text.](#)
- ² Cited in Leslie Rumble and Charles M. Carty, *Radio Replies* (Rockford, 111.: TAN Books, 1979), 3:95. [Back to Text.](#)
- ³ Cyprian, *Epistulae* 59 (55), 14. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Augustine, *Sermones* 131, 10. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Rumble and Carty, *Replies*, 3:96. [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ An example would be Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae vitae*. The encyclical may not have met the requirements of Vatican I, but the doctrine it enunciated is nevertheless infallibly taught. An infallible doctrine can be repeated in a document that is not itself infallible. [Back to Text.](#)

⁷ Joseph Zacchello, *Secrets of Romanism* (Neptune, N.J.: Loizeaux Brothers, 1948), 10-11. There never were three Popes at once, of course. The problem was determining which of three claimants was the real Pope. [Back to Text.](#)

⁸ Woodrow, *Babylon*, 100. [Back to Text.](#)

⁹ Woodrow, *Babylon*, 101. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁰ Woodrow, *Babylon*, 102. [Back to Text.](#)

¹¹ Woodrow, *Babylon*, 102-3. [Back to Text.](#)

¹² Martin Luther's name, when written in Latin, also tallies 666, as do hundreds of other names. [Back to Text.](#)

¹³ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 233. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁴ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 236. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁵ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 238. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁶ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 236. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁷ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 241. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁸ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 239. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 243. [Back to Text.](#)

²⁰ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 248. [Back to Text.](#)

²¹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 250. [Back to Text.](#)

²² Boettner, *Catholicism*, 248. [Back to Text.](#)

²³ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 248. [Back to Text.](#)

²⁴ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 249. [Back to Text.](#)

²⁵ Ronald Knox and Arnold Lunn, *Difficulties* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1952), 126-27. [Back to Text.](#)

²⁶ Knox, *Difficulties*, 127. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 19

¹ Hugh Pope, *The Layman's New Testament* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1934), 333. [Back to Text.](#)

- ² Jimmy Swaggart, “The Mass—The Holy Eucharist”, *The Evangelist*, October 1985, 35. [Back to Text.](#)
- ³ From his tracts *The Roman Catholic Sacrifice of the Mass* and *The Mystery of the Eucharist*. [Back to Text.](#)
- ⁴ Brewer, *Sacrifice and Mystery*, [Back to Text.](#)
- ⁵ From his tract *Transubstantiation*. [Back to Text.](#)
- ⁶ Rumble and Carty, *Replies*, 186. [Back to Text.](#)
- ⁷ Swaggart, “Mass”, 38. [Back to Text.](#)
- ⁸ Ignatius, *Epistula ad Smyrnaeos* 6, 2. [Back to Text.](#)
- ⁹ Justin Martyr, *Apologia prima pro Christianis* 65. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁰ Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 5, 2, 2; 4, 33, 7. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹¹ Origen, *In Exodum komiliae* 13, 3. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹² Athanasius, *Sermo ad nuper baptizatos*. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹³ Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses* 22, 6. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁴ In the tract *The Mystery of the Eucharist*, [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁵ Ambrose, *De sacramentis libri sex* 4, 4, 14. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁶ Paschasius Radbertus, *De corpore et sanguine Domini*. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁷ Newman Eberhardt, *A Summary of Catholic History* (St. Louis: Herder, 1961), 1:464. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁸ Eberhardt, *Summary*, 1:610. [Back to Text.](#)
- ¹⁹ From his tract *The Holy Eucharist: Earing the Flesh of Deity*. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²⁰ *Challenger*, October / November 1984. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²¹ O’Brien, *Faith*, 215. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²² Personal correspondence to the author from Barbara Nauer. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²³ Green, *Eucharist*, [Back to Text.](#)
- ²⁴ Nicholas Wiseman, *Lectures on the Real Presence*, 319. [Back to Text.](#)
- ²⁵ Leslie Rumble and Charles M. Carty, *Eucharist Quizzes to a Street Preacher* (Rockford, 111.: TAN Books, 1976), 7-8. [Back to Text.](#)

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- ¹ Swaggart, “Mass”, 33-34. [Back to Text.](#)
- ² Boettner, *Catholicism*, 175. [Back to Text.](#)

- ³ In his tract *The Sacrifice of the Mass*, [Back to Text](#).
- ⁴ *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 47. [Back to Text](#).
- ⁵ Rumble and Carty, *Quizzes*, 7. [Back to Text](#).
- ⁶ Lunn, *Third Day*, 103. [Back to Text](#).
- ⁷ O'Brien, *Faith*, 304. [Back to Text](#).
- ⁸ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 175. [Back to Text](#).
- ⁹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 176. [Back to Text](#).
- ¹⁰ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 176. [Back to Text](#).
- ¹¹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 176. [Back to Text](#).
- ¹² Stravinskas, *Response*, 91. [Back to Text](#).
- ¹³ Rumble and Carty, *Replies*, 1:176. [Back to Text](#).
- ¹⁴ Woodrow, *Babylon*, 125. [Back to Text](#).
- ¹⁵ Zacchello, *Secrets*, 69. [Back to Text](#).
- ¹⁶ Stravinskas, *Response*, 85. [Back to Text](#).
- ¹⁷ Jimmy Swaggart, *Roman Catholicism* (Baton Rouge: Jimmy Swaggart Ministries, 1986), 60. [Back to Text](#).
- ¹⁸ For instance, Bartholomew F. Brewer in his tract *Scriptural Truths for Roman Catholics*. [Back to Text](#).
- ¹⁹ Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 4, 17, 5. [Back to Text](#).
- ²⁰ Clement of Rome, *Epistula ad Corinthios* 44, 4. [Back to Text](#).
- ²¹ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 174. [Back to Text](#).
- ²² Ronald Knox, *The Window in the Wall* (London: Burns and Oates, 1956), 80. [Back to Text](#).

CHAPTER 21

¹ I once heard a priest recount the Miracle of the Sun, as he saw it as a boy from his home in the Azores. None of his relatives believed him when he explained what he witnessed in the sky. They presumed it was a childish fantasy. Weeks later the accounts from Fatima filtered in, and only then did his family understand that he had been granted a special privilege. This kind of story, when told by the protagonist himself, can be particularly effective in convincing people of the reality of saintly interventions, but few people, particularly outside the Church, ever have a chance to talk with an eyewitness to the supernatural. [Back to Text](#).

² John Henry Newman, *Letter to the Rev. E. B. Pusey, D. D., on his*

Recent Eirenicon (1566). [Back to Text.](#)

³ Orestes A. Brownson, *Saint Worship* (Paterson, NJ.: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1963), 40. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Brownson, *Worship*, 51-54. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Boettner, *Catholicism*, 142-43. [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ Zacchello, *Secrets*, 129-30. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 22

¹ At least the New Jerusalem Bible, in its footnote to Luke 1:28, says that “you who enjoy God’s favour” means “you who have been and remain filled with the divine favour”. [Back to Text.](#)

² Rene Laurentin, *The Truth of Christmas beyond the Myths* (Petersham, Mass.: St. Bede’s Publications, 1986), 18-19. [Back to Text.](#)

³ *Ineffabilis Deus* (Denz. 1641). [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ William Wordsworth, “The Virgin”, *Complete Works of William Wordsworth* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), 7:316, [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ *Munificentissimus Deus* (Denz. 2333). [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ *Fulgens Corona* 21. [Back to Text.](#)

⁷ Frank. Sheed, *The Church and I* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1974), 46. [Back to Text.](#)

⁸ M. L. Cozens, *A Handbook of Heresies* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1974), 45. [Back to Text.](#)

⁹ *Summa theologiae* III, 26, 1. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁰ *Summa theologiae* III, 30, 1. [Back to Text.](#)

¹¹ This is an example of fundamentalists’ curious penchant for proof by (misapplied) statistics. Some of them base their belief in the inspiration of Scripture on the mathematical unlikelihood of a long series of Old Testament prophecies coming true. Unfortunately for them, such an argument has nothing to say about the inspiration of biblical books that do not contain prophecies. [Back to Text.](#)

¹² Bill Jackson, *A Christian’s Guide to Roman Catholicism* (Manteca, Calif.: Christians Evangelizing Catholics, n.d.), sec. 36. [Back to Text.](#)

¹³ Jerome, *De perpetua virginitate Beatae Mariae adversus Helvidium*. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁴ Fragment in Eusebius Pamphilius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 4, 22, 4; 3, 11,

1. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 23

¹ For a dispassionate account, see Fernand Hayward, *The Inquisition* (Staten Island, N. J.: Alba House, 1965). [Back to Text.](#)

² Boettner, *Catholicism*, 433. [Back to Text.](#)

³ Kevin Long, “The Spanish Inquisition: A Second Look”, *Faith & Reason*, Summer 1982, 59-60. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Rumble and Carty, *Replies*, 1:218, [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ *Goethes Werke* (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1867), 20:245. [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ William Thomas Walsh, *Isabella of Spain* (New York: Robert M. McBride, 1930), 275; R. Trevor Davies, *The Golden Century of Spain: 1501—1621* (London: Macmillan, 1937), 14. [Back to Text.](#)

⁷ Henry C. Lea, *A History of the Inquisition in the Middle Ages* (New York: Harper, 1887). [Back to Text.](#)

⁸ Elphege Vacandard, *L’Inquisition* (Paris, 1907), viii. [Back to Text.](#)

⁹ G. G. Coulton and Arnold Lunn, *Is the Catholic Church Anti-Social?* (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1946), 127. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁰ Coulton and Lunn, *Anti-Social?* 1:04-12, 128, 132. [Back to Text.](#)

¹¹ Coulton and Lunn, *Anti-Social?* 110. [Back to Text.](#)

¹² Ronald Knox and Arnold Lunn, *Difficulties* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1952), 40. [Back to Text.](#)

¹³ Only slightly less preposterous, Jimmy Swaggart claims “the Roman Catholic church murdered some *twenty million* people during the existence of the Inquisition.” *Catholicism*, 31. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁴ The present-day population of France, Spain, and Italy is about 150 million. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁵ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Inquisition”, 8:35. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁶ Jean Guitton, *Great Heresies and Church Councils* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 130. [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁷ Donald Attwater, ed., *A Catholic Dictionary* (New York: Macmillan, 1949), 236. [Back to Text.](#)

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¹ Sheed and Ward, *Evidence*, 20. [Back to Text.](#)

² Frank Sheed, *Death into Life* (New York: Arena Lettres, 1977), 74. [Back to Text.](#)

³ Ronald Knox, *Enthusiasm* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), v-vi. [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ Knox, *Enthusiasm*, 422. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Knox, *Enthusiasm*, 515. [Back to Text.](#)

CHAPTER 25

¹ Not every apologetics book is useful in dealing with fundamentalists. Some are written more for the inquiring agnostic than for the believing Protestant, and even those that are not usually neglect fundamentalism's specific charges. Since these charges are often identical to ones leveled against the Church two generations ago, many of the most useful apologetics works are old. Distressingly few recent works about the Faith discuss problems in Church history or argue the foundation of doctrines—apparently because the authors think history is unimportant and doctrines are mutable. [Back to Text.](#)

² Editors of encyclopedias excepted, of course. [Back to Text.](#)

³ Loraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1962). [Back to Text.](#)

⁴ An example is *The Floating Admiral* (New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1931), contributors including Agatha Christie, Dorothy Sayers, G. K. Chesterton, and Ronald Knox. [Back to Text.](#)

⁵ Bernard Orchard et al., eds., *A Catholic Commentary, on Holy Scripture* (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1953). [Back to Text.](#)

⁶ Author of *The Layman's New Testament* (London: Sheed and Ward), 1934, which is particularly helpful in replying to verse-slinging. [Back to Text.](#)

⁷ Reginald C. Fuller et al., eds., *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (London: Nelson, 1969). [Back to Text.](#)

⁸ Raymond E. Brown et al., eds., *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968). [Back to Text.](#)

⁹ William G. Most, *Free from All Error* (Libertyville, 111.: Franciscan Mary town Press, 1985). [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁰ John Steinmueller, *A Companion to Scripture Studies* (New York:

Joseph F. Wagner, 1969). [Back to Text.](#)

¹¹ John Steinmueller, *The Sword of the Spirit* (Waco, Tex.: Stella Maris, 1978). [Back to Text.](#)

¹² Hugh Pope, *English Versions.* [Back to Text.](#)

¹³ Henri Daniel-Rops, *Daily Life in the Time of Jesus* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Servant Books, 1980). [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁴ Eberhardt, *Summary,* [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁵ Fernand Mourret, *A History of the Catholic Church* (St. Louis: Herder, 1946). [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁶ Henri Daniel-Rops, *A History of the Church of Christ* (New York: Dutton, 1960). [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁷ Warren Carroll, *A History of Christendom* (Front Royal, Va.: Christendom College Press, 1985). [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁸ Philip Hughes, *A History of the Church* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1934, 1948). [Back to Text.](#)

¹⁹ Hughes, *A Popular History of the Catholic Church* (New York: Macmillan, 1947). [Back to Text.](#)

²⁰ Eusebius Pamphilius, *The Ecclesiastical History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1975), cited in this book as *Historia ecclesiastica.* [Back to Text.](#)

²¹ Joseph Tixeront, *History of Dogmas* (Westminster, Md.: Christian Classics, 1984). [Back to Text.](#)

²² Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* (Westminster, Md.: Christian Classics, 1983, 1986). [Back to Text.](#)

²³ William A. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1970, 1979). [Back to Text.](#)

²⁴ Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (Rockford, Ill.: TAN Books, 1974). [Back to Text.](#)

²⁵ Newman, *Essay.* [Back to Text.](#)

²⁶ Sheed and Ward, *Evidence.* [Back to Text.](#)

²⁷ In writing *Catholic Evidence Training Outlines*, Frank Sheed was assisted by his wife, Maisie Ward. The portions cited in this book seem to have been written by Sheed. [Back to Text.](#)

²⁸ Rumble and Carty, *Replies.* [Back to Text.](#)

²⁹ Rumble and Carty, *Replies*, I:ix. [Back to Text.](#)

³⁰ Frank Sheed, *Theology and Sanity* (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday

Visitor, 1978). [Back to Text.](#)

³¹ Sheed, *Sanity*, ix. [Back to Text.](#)

³² Sheed, *Sanity*, 324-26. Also to be recommended is Sheed's *Theology for Beginners* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1957), which covers much of the same ground from a different perspective. [Back to Text.](#)

³³ Frank Sheed, *To Know Christ Jesus* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Servant Books, 1980). [Back to Text.](#)

³⁴ Fulton Sheen, *Life of Christ* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977). [Back to Text.](#)

³⁵ Sheen, *Life*, 9. [Back to Text.](#)

³⁶ Romano Guardini, *The Lord* (Chicago: Regnery, 1954). [Back to Text.](#)

³⁷ Guardini, *Lord*, vi. [Back to Text.](#)

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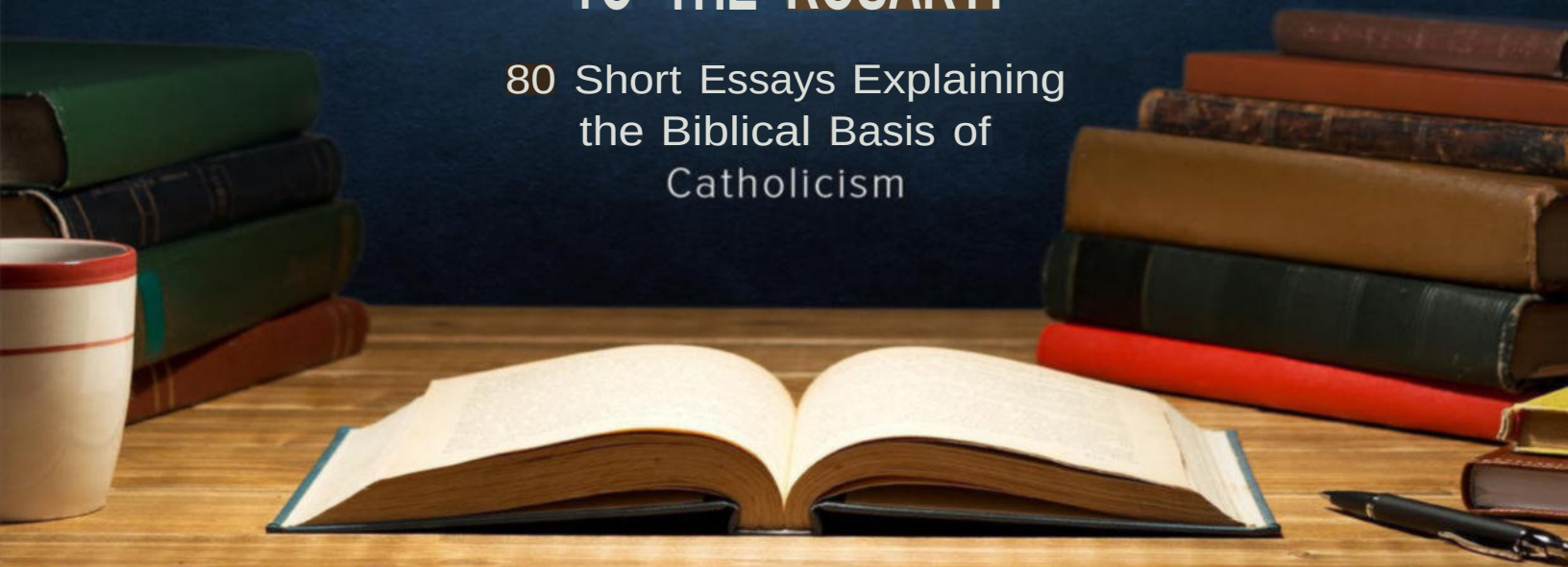
¹ Hilaire Belloc, *Survivals and New Arrivals* (New York: Macmillan, 1930), 20, 56. [Back to Text.](#)

² Joseph Ratzinger, *The Ratzinger Report* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1985), 118. [Back to Text.](#)

PROVING THE CATHOLIC FAITH — IS — BIBLICAL

FROM PRIESTLY CELIBACY
TO THE ROSARY:

80 Short Essays Explaining
the Biblical Basis of
Catholicism



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*To my beautiful wife, Judy,
without whom my career, as it has proceeded,
would have been impossible.*

*I'm deeply grateful always
for your never-ending support.*

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[Dave Armstrong](#)

Introduction

This is a collection of essays that are (1) short (usually two or three pages), (2) characterized by lots of biblical argumentation, and (3) written in defense of Catholicism (apologetics). Most of them came about as a result of my ongoing efforts to comment on issues that regularly come up in “worlds” of Catholic apologetics and theology online.

The brevity of the chapters indicates the trend in my apologetic writing for many years now: “quick,” precise answers to apologetics questions. For better or ill, this is the world that we live in, and the apologist must make efforts (as St. Paul did, and as Vatican II stressed) to meet people where they are.

I don’t deny the continuing utility and necessity of longer treatments (my “corpus” still contains plenty of those!), but most people prefer shorter essays, and their interest in theology and apologetics generally doesn’t extend to treatise-length expositions. This is all the truer for beginners in theology.

Many of these essays were written as columns for *Seton Magazine*, which is devoted to Catholic homeschoolers. Others came from my regular column in *The Michigan Catholic*, the official newspaper for the Archdiocese of Detroit. Some were originally posted as part of my work in the Internet forum of the Coming Home Network from 2007 to 2010 (I was the head moderator during that period), and several were initiated on Facebook. All of these essays are meant to answer the questions that people ask and to make the Catholic Faith more understandable, leading to a confident belief and the ability to “make a defense” (1 Pet. 3:15) for this Faith as opportunities arise. I hope by God’s grace I have accomplished these goals.

Thanks so much for reading, and God bless you!

Tradition Is Not Always a Bad Word in Scripture

One might loosely define tradition as the authoritative and authentic Christian history of theological doctrines and devotional practices. Christianity is fundamentally grounded in the earth-shattering historical events in the life of Jesus Christ (His Incarnation, preaching, miracles, Passion, Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension).

Eyewitnesses (Luke 1:1-2; Acts 1:1-3; 2 Pet. 1:16-18) communicated these true stories to the early Christians, who in turn passed them on to other Christians (under the guidance of the Church's authority) down through the ages. Therefore, Christian tradition, defined as authentic Church history, is unavoidable, and is a very *good* thing: not a bad thing at all.

Many read the accounts of Jesus' conflicts with the Pharisees and get the idea that He was utterly opposed to all tradition whatsoever. This is not true. A close reading of passages such as Matthew 15:3-9 and Mark 7:8-13 will reveal that He condemned only *corrupt* traditions of men, not tradition per se.

Jesus uses qualifying phrases such as "*your* tradition," "*precepts of men*," "*tradition of men*," as opposed to "word of God" or "the commandment of God" and so forth. St. Paul makes exactly the same contrast:

Colossians 2:8: See to it that no one makes a prey of you by philosophy and empty deceit, according to *human* tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to *Christ*.

The New Testament explicitly teaches that traditions can be either good (from God) or bad (from men, when against God's true traditions). Corrupt traditions from the Pharisees were *bad*, although many of their *legitimate* teachings were recognized by Jesus (see, e.g., Matt. 23:3). The spoken gospel and the apostolic writings (some eventually formulated as Holy Scripture) were altogether good: the authentic Christian tradition as revealed by the incarnate God to the apostles and "ratified" by the Church.

The Greek word for *tradition* in the New Testament is *paradosis*. It occurs

in Colossians 2:8 and in the following three passages (among others):

1 Corinthians 11:2: [M]aintain the traditions even as I have delivered them to you.

2 Thessalonians 2:15: [S]tand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter.

2 Thessalonians 3:6: the tradition that you received from us.

St. Paul makes no distinction between written and oral tradition. He doesn't regard oral Christian tradition as bad and undesirable. This is made even clearer in two other statements to Timothy:

2 Timothy 1:13: Follow the pattern of the sound words which you have heard from me.

2 Timothy 2:2: and what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

St. Paul is here urging Timothy not only to "follow" the oral teaching that Timothy had "heard from" him but also to pass it on to *others*. This is a clear picture of authentic historical continuity of Christian doctrine — precisely what the Catholic Church calls *sacred tradition* or, when emphasizing the teaching authority of bishops in the Church, *apostolic succession*.

The phrase "deposit of faith" is also used to describe the original gospel teaching as handed over or delivered to the apostles (see, e.g., Acts 2:42; Jude 3). The Catholic Church considers herself merely the "custodian" or "guardian" of this public revelation or "deposit" from God, because we believe that God set up His Church (Matthew 16), making St. Peter the leader, and that the Church has continued through history ever since. It's all God's doing, not ours. We participate in His plan only by His grace and mercy.

When the first Christians went out and preached the gospel of Jesus Christ after Pentecost, this was oral tradition. Some of it was recorded in the Bible (e.g., in Acts 2) but most was not, and indeed could not be, for sheer volume (see John 20:30; 21:25). It was primarily this oral Christian tradition, not the text of the New Testament (many, if not most, people couldn't read then anyway) that turned the world upside down).

Accordingly, when the phrases "word of God" or "word of the Lord" occur

in Acts and in the epistles, they almost always refer to oral preaching, not to the written word of the Bible, as many Protestants (and probably a lot of Catholics, too) casually assume.

The New Testament itself is a record of primitive, apostolic Christianity. It is a development, so to speak, of both the Old Testament and early oral Christian preaching, teaching, and tradition. The process of canonization of the New Testament took more than three hundred years and involved taking into account human opinions and traditions as to which books were believed to be Scripture. It was not immediately obvious to all Christians (as some foolishly assume or argue).

Many notable Church Fathers accepted books as part of Scripture that are not now so recognized (e.g., *The Shepherd of Hermas*, the *Didache*, the epistle of Barnabas, 1 Clement). Many others didn't accept certain canonical books until very late (e.g., Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, and Revelation). Thus, the Bible cannot be separated and isolated from tradition and a developmental process.

In Catholicism, Scripture and tradition are intrinsically interwoven. They have been described as “twin fountains of the one divine wellspring” (revelation), and cannot be separated, any more than can two wings of a bird, two sides of a coin, or two blades of a pair of scissors.

The Church also has strong authority, so that the Catholic rule of faith consists of Scripture, tradition, and the Church. This may be imagined as a three-legged stool. If you remove any one of the legs, the stool collapses; all three are equally necessary for it to stand up.

That is Catholicism: and (if anyone wonders about it) all these notions are firmly backed up by *Scripture itself*, without any contradiction as regards Catholic tradition or Church dogma and doctrine.

The “Three-Legged Stool” vs. *Sola Scriptura*

Catholics believe in faith that sacred Scripture, sacred tradition, and the authority of the Catholic Church do not and *will not* conflict. They are viewed as pieces of a whole, just as Protestants believe (in faith) that Scripture doesn’t contradict itself and is a harmonious, coherent whole, all the while devoting whole books to supposed Bible difficulties that present a challenge to many readers and believers. One can believe in faith that an answer to a “difficulty” exists and at the same time not deny that there is (on the surface, anyway) a seeming difficulty that requires much scholarship and study to resolve.

Sacred Scripture is true, and God’s inspired, infallible, written Word and revelation. Catholics have always believed this. The scholar Harold Lindsell, former editor of *Christianity Today*, in his book *Battle for the Bible*, joyfully acknowledged that fact and then demonstrated how many Protestant denominations have eroded or denied this doctrine of faith.

The Bible is central and primary in Catholicism as well, but not *exclusively authoritative*. It’s not isolated, or by itself, nor can it even logically be so. We maintain that this was the apostolic and patristic viewpoint, and that of St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, which we preserve unchanged.

The Bible itself points to tradition and the Church as authoritative (for example, the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15); it doesn’t teach that it alone is the Christian’s sole ultimate authority, and, of course, it was the Church that declared the parameters of what books were Scripture in the first place. The famous Presbyterian author R. C. Sproul has noted that the canon was “a fallible collection of infallible books.”

Scripture is what it is, in its essence, and always has been, yet the Church was necessary to settle a matter (the canon) that had indeed achieved a general or broad consensus, yet not without many deviations from what we now regard as Scripture. Some Church fathers thought 1 and 2 Clement and the epistle of Barnabas were Scripture, and books such as Revelation and James were very late in being generally received as such.

So we believe through faith and reason and Scripture that God will protect

the Church from error in her dogmatic pronouncements, because we believe there is one institutional Church (and “one faith,” as St. Paul states), handed down (again, according to Paul) from the apostles, with which other Christians can implicitly be connected, to a greater or lesser degree (particularly by baptism and common beliefs, such as the tenets of the Nicene Creed).

Protestants believe that God protected Holy Scripture from error, by means of inspiration, even though sinful, fallible men wrote it. Catholics agree with that and also believe that God (the Holy Spirit: John 14-16) can protect His Church from error (a merely “negative” and preventive guarantee), by means of infallibility (a lesser supernatural gift than inspiration), even though sinful, fallible men are involved in it.

If God can do one thing, He can do the other. Since we see these things indicated in Scripture and apostolic tradition, we believe them. It takes much faith, because now we are dealing with a human (yet divinely guided) institution, yet this faith is not without biblical and reasonable grounds.

The Catholic Church authoritatively interprets the Bible. But Protestants *also* interpret (and *have* to interpret) the Bible, just as we do. The Bible isn’t self-evident. And this is why Protestants notoriously disagree on many major issues. The real choice, then, isn’t Bible versus Church but rather an individual or denominational interpretation of the Bible versus an interpretation of an authoritative Church based on two thousand years of unbroken developing biblical, apostolic, and patristic tradition and theology.

Seen that way, the Catholic approach is, I submit, more plausible because it has historical substance and continuity and isn’t individualistic or sectarian, nor does it fall into an unbiblical, either-or type of thinking.

Centuries of Wisdom from the Church

The Protestant (especially evangelicals and charismatics — I have been in both camps) tends to look at Scripture and say, “What does this teach *me*?” As far as that goes, there is nothing wrong with it, except when all these individuals look at the same Scripture, which they all revere as the inspired, infallible Word of God, and disagree on the *interpretation*. Then we have a problem, because contradiction means someone is wrong, and wrong is a falsehood, and falsehood comes from the devil, the father of lies. Truth is not relative.

The Catholic Church (contrary to the false stereotype) accepts and encourages the individual to read the Bible, but goes *much* further and deeper than that. G. K. Chesterton said that tradition was the “democracy of the dead.” What he was getting at was the *communal* aspect of historical Christianity. The Catholic believes that the Church has learned a few things over the years and that these can be passed on so that we don’t have to reinvent the wheel in every generation.

The Catholic asks not only what God is communicating to him *individually* but also what He has taught all the millions of *other* Christians throughout history: holy people, saints, Doctors, missionaries, priests, nuns, fervent laypeople. That’s the whole thing about the Church Fathers. They were the “on fire” Christians of the early centuries. What did they believe? What can we learn from them?

We choose the “democracy of the dead” rather than a head count of those of us who happen to be here today or some vote at a national convention or a poll in *Christianity Today*. We believe that if God teaches us things personally, He also teaches other folks too and has done so all along, so that we can learn from them. To a large extent, this is what tradition is. It’s really no more complicated than that.

Protestants have run down and disparaged tradition as barnacles on a ship, to be scraped off, or as corruption, for so long that they miss the simple, obvious beauty of the thing: the democracy of the dead — the community of the saints, gathered not just geographically (like the Jerusalem Council of

Acts 15) but over time as well, throughout history.

Whatever we can ponder in our heads, the Church has, inevitably, thought about for centuries, and has come to conclusions. Catholics trust these, as a function of trust in God, who guides and protects His Church, as we believe. It doesn't mean that the Church has always been perfect in every way, about everything, but when something has been "officially" declared by pope, council, or official catechism, we can accept it as trustworthy.

The individual doesn't have to figure everything out. That's impractical and, I contend, impossible anyway. Who of us is the font of all wisdom? How silly is *that* notion! Who even wants to *have* that burden and responsibility? God never meant His Church or the individual Christian to function that way. There is something far greater than merely our own private judgment and discernment.

That is Catholicism. What has been believed in the past and passed down is extremely important. The Church eventually develops these thoughts and proclaims dogmas, after (usually) many centuries of reflection.

How to Search the Scriptures

St. Paul's authority was accepted in faith by his followers. He spoke with great authority. He said he was delivering truth and tradition, and he expected his followers to accept it without question. There is no hint that he thought otherwise. No one denies that he had profound apostolic authority. The question is whether Scripture alone was the only infallible authority.

St. Paul *explained* things, and argued and defended and so forth, but his authority was unquestioned. So was the authority of the Church, which is why it held a council in Jerusalem and then Paul went out proclaiming the infallible (Acts 15:22, 28) decisions of the council (Acts 16:4) in his missionary journeys.

Acts 17:10-11: The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Beroea; and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with all eagerness, examining the scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

The example of the Bereans does not disprove Catholic authority or suggest *sola Scriptura* at all. The word that they received with "all eagerness" was Paul's oral teaching and preaching, which they confirmed as consistent with Holy Scripture (as Catholics believe all legitimate tradition to be), and an additional revelation. Once they had done that, for them, his teaching was on a par with Scripture and of binding authority.

Searching the Scripture to confirm or defend some doctrine is not the same as *sola Scriptura*. The latter means making the Bible the *only* infallible authority. The mainstream tradition of the Jews at that time (in all likelihood including the Bereans) was Pharisaism, and it accepted oral tradition and an oral Torah received by Moses on Mt. Sinai, in addition to the written Torah. This in and of itself is fundamentally hostile to *sola Scriptura*. The ones who held to a strict Bible-alone view were the Saducees, who accepted only the Torah (the first five books of the Bible). But they denied the resurrection of the righteous in the afterlife.

Searching the Scriptures in and of itself is not somehow opposed to

Catholic authority (I do it all the time myself — and throughout this book — in order to defend and “confirm” Catholic teaching). When Jesus explained to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus the doctrine of the suffering Messiah (after His Resurrection), He did so by means of Scripture (Luke 24:25-27).

He authoritatively “interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself ” (Luke 24:27). This is the role of Church and Tradition. Scripture has to be interpreted by someone with authority. Our Lord did the same when He appeared to the eleven disciples (Luke 24:36-38): “Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures” (Luke 24:45).

The Holy Spirit and the intervention of Jesus were required in order for them to understand. If we interpret on our own apart from the Holy Spirit and disregard for the apostolic tradition preserved by the Church, we can often be led astray (Acts 8:27-35; 2 Pet. 1:20-21; 3:16).

When certain Jews were opposing Jesus, He took them to task for searching the Scriptures (almost as an end in itself) but not seeing that the same Scripture testified to *Him* (John 5:39). In other words, they were trying to separate God from His Word, as if God’s Word didn’t direct men toward God Himself. St. Paul used the same method when he went to the Jews and proclaimed the gospel (see, e.g., Acts 17:2).

Now, if both Jesus and Paul argued from the Scriptures, then Jews who were considering whether their claims were true would naturally do the same. So the Bereans did exactly that. It was a both-and methodology. They weren’t opposing one thing to the other. Both were true, and their harmony with each other confirmed that. They didn’t rule out the possibility that the oral proclamation was true (simply because it was oral); they merely confirmed it from existing written, inspired revelation.

If they had been operating with an either-or mentality, on the other hand, they wouldn’t have “received the [oral] word with all eagerness.” They would have been highly skeptical of it and would have checked it against Scripture; and even if it lined up with Scripture, they would have denied that it was infallible unless it eventually made it into Scripture. But exactly what Paul said to them is *not* recorded in Scripture.

Catholics say that Paul’s word was authoritative and infallible, whether it

was “inscripturated” or not. But many Protestants argue (based on the false premise of *sola Scriptura*) that it only is if it is later recorded in Scripture (a distinction that is itself unbiblical, since Paul’s words are presented as authoritative, *when they are spoken*).

Ten Examples of How the New Testament Reflects the Old Testament

1. **Matthew 6:7:** And in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do.

Sirach 7:14: Do not prattle in the assembly of the elders, nor repeat yourself in your prayer.

2. **Matthew 6:12:** And forgive us our debts / As we also have forgiven our debtors

Sirach 28:2: Forgive your neighbor the wrong he has done, and then your sins will be pardoned when you pray.

3. **Matthew 7:12:** So whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.

Tobit 4:15: And what you hate, do not do to anyone.

4. **Matthew 7:16:** You will know them by their fruits.

Sirach 27:6: The fruit discloses the cultivation of a tree.

5. **Luke 1:52:** [H]e has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree.

Sirach 10:14: The Lord has cast down the thrones of rulers, and has seated the lowly in their place.

6. **Acts 17:29:** Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the Deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, a representation by the art and imagination of man.

Wisdom 13:10: But miserable, with their hopes set on dead things, are the men who give the name "gods" to the works of men's hands, gold and silver fashioned with skill, and likenesses of animals, or a useless stone, the work of an ancient hand.

7. **Romans 1:20:** Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made.

Wisdom 13:1: For all men who were ignorant of God were foolish by nature; and they were unable from the good things that are seen to know him who exists, nor did they recognize the craftsman while paying heed to his works.

8. **Romans 9:21:** Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for beauty and another for menial use?

Wisdom 15:7: For when a potter kneads the soft earth and laboriously molds each vessel for our service, he fashions out of the same clay both the vessels that serve clean uses and those for contrary uses, making all in like manner; but which shall be the use of each of these the worker in clay decides.

9. **Hebrews 11:35:** Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, that they might rise again to a better life.

2 **Maccabees 7:28-29:** I beseech you, my child, . . . Do not fear this butcher, but prove worthy of your brothers. Accept death, so that in God's mercy I may get you back again with your brothers.

10. **Revelation 8:2:** Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.

Tobit 12:15: I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels who present the prayers of the saints and enter into the presence of the glory of the Holy One.

Why We Accept the Catholic Church's Claims

The bottom line is that faith is a gift of God, by His grace. The very faith to believe that God not only made a way for salvation, but also provided an authoritative *Church*, through which He chose to channel that salvation and to provide guidance, is a *gift*. It doesn't come from our reasoning efforts. Reason can bring us up to the gates, but it can't prove that the gates and what lie behind them are what they *are*, or compel us to walk through them and enter in.

What reason and facts and evidence *can* do is to confirm over and over that the Catholic Church is right. When that happens so many times, it becomes easier (by the weight of cumulative evidence) to accept in faith that she is *always* right when she claims something dogmatically or infallibly. We must accept that there are things that we don't and can't understand and must believe because of what we *do* understand. No one can ever figure out every jot and tittle. For one thing, no one has the *time* to do so.

It's a matter of agreeing with biblical revelation that there is indeed such a thing as an authoritative Church, set up by God (and initiated by Jesus' commission to St. Peter in Matthew 16) and then judging (again, led by grace and the Holy Spirit, the Helper) whether the Catholic claims are feasible and plausible.

My greatest struggle was with the notion of infallibility, so I understand that objection inside and out. But I kept studying and talking to Catholic friends and saw that none of the alternatives were plausible, and so I yielded myself.

I've become more and more assured of this truth during my nearly twenty-four years of defending it. The more I learn, the more my faith is strengthened (*never* weakened), and this is one of the joys of apologetics.

Catholic Ecclesiology and the Jerusalem Council

In the Catholic model, ecumenical councils make decisions (led and guided by the Holy Spirit) in tandem with the popes, who preside and have “veto power.” It’s both-and.

The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) spoke for and to the entire Church. St. Paul then proclaimed its edicts in other regions — in this case, Asia Minor, or modern-day Turkey, which was quite a ways away — as binding and obligatory upon all:

Acts 15:25, 30: [I]t has seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to choose men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul. . . . So when they were sent off, they went down to Antioch; and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter.

Acts 16:4: As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions which had been reached by the apostles and elders who were at Jerusalem.

If someone wants to argue that James presided at the council, he was still, nevertheless, acting as a bishop (of Jerusalem) and presiding over a council that made binding legal decisions obligatory on all Christians everywhere. That’s not congregationalism; it’s not even Presbyterian government. It’s clearly Episcopal / Catholic ecclesiology and contradicts some notion of local congregationalism or independent autonomy.

Some argue that it was merely a local council of Jerusalem (the great evangelical scholar F. F. Bruce takes that view). If so, how is it that Paul acts as he does in Asia Minor (Acts 16:4)? How can the Jerusalem Church have jurisdiction over those Christians unless episcopalian government is in place?

Moreover, the biblical text informs us that a letter was written to “the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia” (Acts 15:23). It is written in the language of command (although gently so):

Acts 15:28-29: For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is

strangled and from unchastity. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.

How is it that one local church in Jerusalem (according to the nonepiscopal view) can give “binding orders” to other local churches far away? That is nonsensical in a congregational interpretation. But it makes perfect sense with an episcopal or even papal / Catholic view.

If this shows (as I think it does) a “higher” church authority giving binding decisions to Christians over wide geographical areas, then it is a model, by common sense. Otherwise, why is it included in revelation? These things are in Scripture for our instruction.

Three Biblical Arguments for the Authority of the Church

My friend Al Kresta (a Catholic radio talk-show host and author) once noted that in C. S. Lewis's famous book *Mere Christianity*, which was an ecumenical effort to find things that all Christians shared in common, and the "nonnegotiables" of Christianity, a central, crucial doctrine of two of the three major divisions of Christianity was omitted.

The great Anglican apologist did not include a doctrine of the Church as a binding authority in the Christian life, which is a belief strongly held by Catholics and Orthodox, but formally denied by Protestants, who hold that only Scripture is an infallible authority (what is known as *sola Scriptura*, "Bible alone").

As a Catholic convert, whose former biggest objection to Catholicism, by far, was the notion of an infallible Church or pope, I understand this viewpoint, but I thoroughly reject it now. As an introduction to the topic, I'd like to highlight three biblical passages that teach a very strong view of the authority of the Christian, or Catholic, Church.

Matthew 16:18-19: And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

This is also a key passage for the defense of the papacy, but that is a separate topic. Here I want to note that there is such a thing in the Bible as "the Church" and that it was established by Jesus Christ Himself as His own Church. Some comedian once made a wisecrack about there being "only one *the* Church." He spoke the truth.

St. Peter and the other apostles (of whom bishops and priests are successors) were given the power to bind and loose: Jewish rabbinical terms for penance (binding) and forgiveness extended by a representative of God (loosing). These decisions corresponded with the decrees or will of heaven

itself (that is, God). Therefore, such power is indicative of a strong view of the authority of the Church.

The third notable element in this passage is the concept of the “powers of death” not being able to prevail against the Church. This means that the Church (not just individual Christians, but the collective entity) will always emerge victorious in her spiritual battles. The King James Version renders the phrase “powers of death” as “gates of hell.” This brings to mind a great image of the Church breaking through, conquering the gates of hell itself and overcoming evil and Satan.

Acts 16:4: As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions which had been reached by the apostles and elders who were at Jerusalem.

This verse is often overlooked in discussions about authority in Christianity. St. Paul didn’t simply hand out Bibles, nor did he preach the gospel only on his evangelistic journeys. He also proclaimed an authoritative Church decision, made at the Jerusalem Council, which is described in Acts 15:1-30.

What happened there was not “Bible alone” or individual Christians and the Holy Spirit, independent of other Christians, but very clearly a strong *Church* authority. The “apostles and elders” (Acts 15:6), representing the “whole church” (Acts 15:22) gathered, much as bishops in our time got together at the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).

The main question they dealt with was whether Gentile Christian converts were required to be circumcised and to observe the entire Jewish Law. The Church in her council decided that it was *not* necessary, with the participants confidently proclaiming, “[I]t has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us.” The Holy Spirit guided the process (see John 16:13).

St. Paul then went out and proclaimed what the council (including him) had decided, to be observed as a binding decree. If that’s not Church authority, it’s difficult to imagine what would be. If God approved of such Church-wide decisions in the early Church, why not also today? Why would that cease? It makes no sense to argue that it all went away and that we were left to fend for ourselves as mere individuals.

1 Timothy 3:15: the household of God, which is the church of the living

God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth.

Truth is truth. It cannot be error, by its very essence and definition. How can truth's foundation or pillar or bulwark or ground be something *less* than total truth (since truth itself contains no falsehoods, untruths, lies, or errors)? It cannot. It's impossible, as a straightforward matter of logic and plain observation. A stream cannot rise above its source.

What is built on a foundation cannot be *greater* than the foundation. If it were, the whole structure would collapse. If an elephant stood on the shoulders of a man as its foundation, that foundation would collapse. The base of a skyscraper has to hold the weight above it. It can't be weaker than that which is built upon it. The foundations of a suspension bridge over a river have to be strong enough to hold up that bridge. They can't possibly be weaker than the bridge, or the structure would collapse.

Therefore, we must conclude that if the Church is the *foundation* of truth, the Church *must* be infallible, since truth is infallible, and the foundation cannot be *less* great or strong than that which is built on it. Truth cannot be built on any degree of error whatever, because that would make the foundation weaker than the superstructure above it.

Accordingly, given the above biblical passages and many others, the Catholic "three-legged stool" rule of faith may be defined in the following way:

In the biblical (and historic Catholic) view the inspired, infallible Bible is interpreted by an infallible, divinely guided Church, which in turn infallibly interprets and formulates the true doctrinal (apostolic) tradition.

Calling Catholic Priests *Father*

This is one of those garden-variety objections to Catholicism that come up so often. Like many such contra-Catholic arguments, it seems to have a plausibility at first glance. But on closer examination, the alleged difficulty vanishes. As so often is the case, this objection arises from an ignorance of the different forms of language in the Bible and of the importance of context. Critics of the Catholic Church frequently misunderstand both factors.

Matthew 23:9: And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven.

That seems straightforward enough, doesn't it? How do Catholics get around this? Are we wantonly disregarding and disobeying a direct command of our Lord Jesus?

No, not at all. Jesus was simply using the common Hebrew teaching method of exaggeration or hyperbole. This is common in, for example, the book of Proverbs. Here are several other instances of the same sort of thing:

Matthew 7:3: Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?

Matthew 18:9: And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire.

Matthew 19:24: Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

Matthew 23:24: You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!

Luke 14:26: If any one comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

Jesus was making the point that God the Father is the ultimate source of all authority. He said this during the course of rebuking the Pharisees for spiritual pride (Matt. 23:2-10). Those who try to reason in this way fail to see that, taken literally, Jesus' command would prohibit *all* uses of the word

father, even in reference to biological fathers. Since that is an absurd outcome, it is clear that the statement cannot be taken in an absolute sense.

Such a sweeping prohibition clearly isn't what Jesus had in mind, since He uses the term *father* many times (and thus was not even following His own command, if the criticism is correct):

Matthew 15:4: For God commanded, "Honor your father and your mother," and, "He who speaks evil of father or mother, let him surely die."

Matthew 19:5: For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

Matthew 21:31: Which of the two did the will of his father?

Luke 16:24: And he called out, "Father Abraham, have mercy upon me." (cf. Luke 16:27, 30)

John 8:56: Your father Abraham rejoiced that he was to see my day; he saw it and was glad.

St. Stephen, St. Paul, and St. James use the term *father*:

Acts 7:2: And Stephen said: "Brethren and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham."

Romans 4:12: the father of the circumcised . . . our father Abraham.

Romans 4:16-17: Abraham . . . is the father of us all, as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations."

Romans 9:10: And not only so, but also when Rebecca had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac.

1 Corinthians 4:15: For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Philippians 2:22: But Timothy's worth you know, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel.

James 2:21: Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar?

It's a standard rule in hermeneutics (the interpretation of Scripture) that we interpret less clear passages of the Bible in light of passages relatively more

clear. This is a classic case. What seemed so simple at first is shown to be a more complex, hyperbolic saying that can't possibly be taken literally in light of the abundant related scriptural data.

Jesus could not contradict Himself, nor could His apostles blatantly disregard or be unfamiliar with His teaching (right in inspired Scripture!). Therefore, the objection to calling Catholic priests *father* must be discarded, as a misguided nonstarter.

We Believe *All* That the Church Teaches

We call these doctrines that all Catholics must accept *de fide* (or, in some cases, *ex cathedra*) dogmas. In a nutshell, although there are fine (sometimes very fine) distinctions that can be drawn, Catholics are obliged, in the nature of the case, to accept all that the Church teaches.

It's an act of faith to accept that the Catholic Church is the one true Church established by Jesus Christ, historically continuous, universal, specially protected by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of passing down the apostolic deposit.

Because we accept this in faith as Catholics, it is required that we accept *all* that the Church teaches. To do that is itself a result of supernatural grace from God.

Protestants don't look at it that way because, first of all, they deny that the Church is infallible. Once one does that, it is a completely new rule of faith. For Protestants, this rule is *sola Scriptura*, or the idea that Scripture is the only infallible source of faith.

Therefore, it is very difficult for Protestants to accept the notion of submitting to a Church's teaching in faith, because for them, no Church has it completely right; only the Bible does that. They often see this as virtually a violation of people's right to think for themselves or a violation of one's conscience.

It is neither. Rather, it is a recognition of our limitations, of something higher than ourselves, established by God, and of a Christian faith that includes acknowledgment of an authoritative, infallible Church. It takes faith, and faith is a supernatural gift granted by God through His grace and the assistance of the Holy Spirit. It's not *mere* reason but can be *supported* by reason, like all Christian dogma.

Some Protestants use the word *dogma*, but they generally prefer the word *doctrine*. To the extent that they are serious about historical Christian doctrine, Protestants do, of course, require a set of beliefs, too — just not as many as Catholics do. I always use the example of Calvinists. A truly

Calvinist denomination (Presbyterian, Reformed, in their traditional forms and belief structures) would not allow a member to deny the five tenets of TULIP:

Total depravity

Unconditional election

Limited atonement

Irresistible grace

Perseverance of the saints

Disbelief in even two or three would not be permitted. They would no longer be considered members of the denomination, in terms of adherence to the creed of the group.

There are always people who join groups but disagree on some of the tenets of those groups. Catholics are not literally disallowed to have doubts and uncertainties (the Church is not simplistic or naive about such things), but they are supposed to accept *in faith* all that the Church teaches, and must certainly not openly oppose it, whether they fully understand everything or not.

As an analogy from my Protestant days, I attended Assemblies of God churches for four years, but I disagreed with one of the 16 Fundamental Truths that everyone in the denomination was required to adhere to: the one (actually a combination of numbers 7 and 8) asserting that everyone had to speak in tongues in order to receive the “endowment of power.” This I felt to be expressly contrary to Paul’s teaching about tongues, where he says that not all speak in tongues (1 Cor. 12:30). Because of this, I never became a member. I was simply being honest, saying in effect: “I don’t accept all sixteen truths that I am supposed to accept, so I won’t become a member, but I agree with almost everything else taught.”¹

The Catholic Church doesn’t expect everyone to have perfect faith or knowledge and to understand fully every jot and tittle. But the Church expects a humble submission to that which has been established and held from the beginning (with development of doctrine and increased understanding along the way).

There are always, despite all these considerations, people who are *in a*

group but not totally *of* it. Many times, they don't properly *understand* the teachings of their own group. Other times, they do fully understand, and disagree, as I did in the Assemblies of God. I did what I felt was the only honest thing and did not become a member, because that would have entailed ostensible agreement with a tenet that I did not accept. It would have been dishonest.

To make fairly simple and practical this concept of accepting all that the Church teaches, Catholics are not at liberty to disagree with, for example, what is included in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. It was promulgated under Pope John Paul II in 1992, accompanied by the Apostolic Constitution *Fidei Depositum*, which stated in part:

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which I approved 25 June last and the publication of which I today order by virtue of my Apostolic Authority, is a statement of the Church's faith and of catholic doctrine, attested to or illumined by Sacred Scripture, the Apostolic Tradition and the Church's Magisterium. I declare it to be a sure norm for teaching the faith and thus a valid and legitimate instrument for ecclesial communion.

...

Therefore, I ask all the Church's Pastors and the Christian faithful to receive this catechism in a spirit of communion and to use it assiduously in fulfilling their mission of proclaiming the faith and calling people to the Gospel life. This catechism is given to them that it may be a sure and authentic reference text for teaching catholic doctrine and particularly for preparing local catechisms. It is also offered to all the faithful who wish to deepen their knowledge of the unfathomable riches of salvation (cf. *Eph* 3:8). It is meant to support ecumenical efforts that are moved by the holy desire for the unity of all Christians, showing carefully the content and wondrous harmony of the catholic faith. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, lastly, is offered to every individual who asks us to give an account of the hope that is in us (cf. *1 Pt* 3:15) and who wants to know what the Catholic Church believes.²

¹ Actually, looking at those truths again, I see that I didn't realize that number 12, on divine healing, is as sweeping as it is. It almost promises a healing for any true believer, which is dangerously false teaching that has caused untold misery and suffering and deaths in many cases, because people were misunderstanding how biblical healing works and how often it should be expected.

² Pope St. John Paul II, Apostolic constitution *Fidei Depositum*, October 11, 1992, no. 3.

The Claim to Be the One True Church

I find it noteworthy that the Catholic Church is far and away the most controversial, hated, despised Christian body (as Jesus predicted that His disciples would be). I regard that as strikingly analogous to the reactions to both Jesus and the early Christians. Radical truth claims have a way of creating controversy and strong opinions one way or the other.

The deeper question is: Would we expect *a priori* (in attempting to step back from our “sectarian” vantage points and looking at this issue with as much theoretical objectivity as we can muster) that the claims of the Christian Church (however it is defined) would cause such a controversial, polarizing reaction, or would we expect the one true Church (assuming that this is a valid, biblical claim and category) to elicit yawns and “ho hums” (or even laughter, as the case may be)? Clearly, the actual reaction was always closer to the former.

I think it is significant, then, that it is the Catholic Church’s claims that always seem to be the focus of controversy. The Church is accused of all sorts of things, precisely because she is confident (or, triumphalistic, from a more cynical viewpoint) enough to make the claim in the first place — one that appears to me to be a rather routine, particularly Pauline one, in Holy Scripture.

In other words, the claim itself is the bare minimum prerequisite for being considered a contender for what the claim asserts. Most other Christians, meanwhile, want either to avoid it (a sort of ethereal “ecumenism”) or to let it die the death of a thousand qualifications (settling for the unbiblical, anti-incarnational notion of the “invisible church,” et cetera).

How does one determine what actually represents sacred tradition, if this is not determined by some authoritative Church? The problem is that, on one hand, mere private judgment is exercised (which has a host of difficulties, both biblically and historically, not to mention logically). On the other, the historical ecclesiological claim of being the one true Church cannot plausibly be made by anyone other than the Catholic Church.

That gets us right back to the rival claims and whether they are qualitatively equivalent. I say they are not, and I say that without the slightest trace of “triumphalism.” I simply believe that no Church other than the Catholic Church can make this claim without massive self-contradiction or such a lack of plausibility as to make it impossible even to set forth the claim without running into a host of difficulties that are unable to be defended rationally.

Once this is understood (I accepted it after having read Newman’s *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*), it is seen that the choice is not so much the best one, but rather, the only *plausible* one. If difficulties with individual Catholic dogmas remain, one has to realize that one’s private judgment is insufficient to judge such a massive thing as the Catholic Church, with the overwhelming weight of tradition behind it.

One has to submit at some point, in faith, as a matter of intellectual duty and in obedience to the leading of grace and faith. Note that I don’t say that everyone understands Catholicism sufficiently to make such a commitment, and there are many reasons for that. My case here doesn’t require a judgment that all non-Catholics are dishonest or insincere in their convictions (absolutely not!).

But I am saying that once one grasps these issues (*if* in fact how I described them above is the correct way of analyzing these matters), it is incumbent on him to either become a Catholic or to set forth some compelling counterargument as to why he should not.

Much of the hostility toward the Catholic Church comes from (in my opinion) the reaction against her claim to be the one true Church. I don’t think there is any question that the Church receives more flak for her claims than anyone else. As the Church make more claims than anyone else in the first place, this is to be expected, I suppose. But it is not insignificant.

On Whether God Would Protect His Church from Error

In a discussion with an Anglican and two other men who were possibly also Anglican, but in any event, not Catholics, I asked them which of these statements they thought was true:

1. God is *unable* to preserve Christian doctrine without error throughout history by means of (in and of themselves, without His aid) fallen, imperfect, fallible men and an imperfect Church run by such men (i.e., sinners). Since you seem to think He was unable to do that with the Bible, too, I suppose you would affirm this, but I'm asking, to be sure.
2. God was, of course, *able* to do this if He chose to (being omnipotent), but He chose *not* to do so.

"If you chose number 1," I asked them, "why do you believe that? Is it because you deny God's omnipotence? If you chose number 2, why do you think God would not protect true theology from corruption, especially in light of the biblical teaching that the Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth?"

One of them responded that it was "highly presumptuous" to speculate about what God should or would do or why He does it. I don't agree at all — not when what He does or doesn't do is a function of His omnipotence, and if it is indicated in Scripture as harmonious with what we in fact see Him doing, and when it involves something of high importance to the well-being of souls.

Basically my argument here was a subtle variation of a *reductio ad absurdum*: I am working from what we *know* to more *speculative* things. I don't regard it as a species of epistemology at all; rather, it is an exercise in consistency of logic combined with data from revelation that Protestants and Catholics hold in common. And, as usual, I am probing premises, because I think they have been insufficiently scrutinized in this instance.

I continued: "If we grant that He allows error, how much error do you think He allows? You give a nod to the Holy Spirit's guidance below, so do you think it goes a certain distance and then we are on our own? That wasn't

the view at the council of Jerusalem or St. Paul's. Everything was quite certain then and "seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us" (Acts 15:28). But that was before the days when denominations and division had to be rationalized as somehow remotely sanctioned by Holy Scripture."

I deliberately compared this situation to the infallible, inspired Bible, because most orthodox Christians throughout history have held a very high view of Scripture. God did that via sinful men, so the question becomes: "Why should doctrine or creeds be any different?"

It's a very serious (and I believe, important) question and a matter of trust in God and acceptance of what seems fairly obvious (at least to me) in Scripture; i.e., a matter of revelation, which exists apart from a necessary epistemological rationale. We accept what it says in faith. One could say it comes down to hermeneutics, too, since what I see in the Bible seems perfectly harmonious with an authoritative Church, preserved from error.

I never received anywhere near direct or serious counterarguments to my questions, but one can only try. If we keep asking relevant questions and receive no better answers than what we believe Catholicism provides, to us this is evidence of the fullness of truth within Catholicism and the incoherence and implausibility of alternatives.

Are Church Councils More Authoritative Than Popes?

THE CHURCH³

The council is a higher authority than a pope.

Rome's theory of popes presiding over councils is a self-serving late invention.

Initial reply

In the only Church council recorded in Scripture: the Jerusalem council, Peter presided, and the Catholic Church has simply followed that biblical model.

Extensive reply

The council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-29) gives us an example in God's revelation, the Bible, of how Church affairs might proceed. The topic at hand was whether the Gentiles had to follow the Mosaic Law completely, including all of its rituals and ceremonies. It seems clear that Peter, the leader of the apostles, presided over this council. It was not without a leader; nor was James, the bishop of Jerusalem, the leader, as some maintain. The internal evidence in favor of this interpretation is as follows:

1. St. Peter was the first to speak definitively, and with authority, "after there had been much debate" (Acts 15:7).
2. Peter claimed authority in a special way: "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the Gospel and believe" (Acts 15:7).
3. Peter sternly rebuked the opposing view of strict observance of ceremonial law: "Now therefore why do you make trial of God by putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?" (Acts 15:10).
4. After Peter spoke, the debate was essentially over, and "all the assembly kept silence" (Acts 15:12).
5. Those who talked after Peter did not disagree with his decision, and merely confirmed it (Acts 15:12-21).
6. St. James did not hand down the main decree or add anything new to

what Peter had already proclaimed. He started out by noting, “Simeon [Peter] has related . . .” (Acts 15:14).

7. James states, “Therefore my judgment . . .”, but this does not prove that he presided, as anyone could say that (similar to saying, “My opinion is . . .”). The judgment was reached by consensus (“it seemed good to the apostles and elders, with the whole church” [Acts 15:22]; “it has seemed good to us, having come to one accord” [Acts 15:25]; “it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us” [Acts 15:28; cf. 16:4]). This, too, is exactly like Catholic councils throughout history: they decide matters as a group, yet the pope presides. Nothing in this text suggests other than that Peter was the leader.
8. St. Paul is not shown as having any special authority in the council (many think he had more authority in the early Church than Peter). Instead, we learn that he and Barnabas “were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders about this question” (Acts 15:2). Paul and Barnabas merely give report of their experiences (Acts 15:12), and then they are sent by the council to report what had been decided (Acts 15:25, 30; 16:4).

Objection

But the Catholic view of papal infallibility and popes presiding over councils was not made infallible dogma until 1870 (First Vatican Council), so it was a novelty.

Reply to Objection

That doesn’t mean that this state of affairs was not already in place. It had been explicitly proclaimed and exercised since the early centuries of the Church, and we already see it in the Bible (as above). As just one example of many such statements from Church historians, the Anglican patristics expert J.N.D. Kelly, wrote:

By the middle of the fifth century the Roman church had established, *de jure* as well as *de facto*, a position of primacy in the West, and the papal claims to supremacy over all bishops in Christendom had been formulated in precise terms. . . . The student tracing the history of the times . . . cannot fail to be impressed by the skill and persistence with which the Holy See was continually advancing and consolidating its claims. . . . It was easy to draw the inference that the unique authority

which Rome in fact enjoyed, and which the popes saw concentrated in their persons and their office, was no more than the fulfillment of the divine plan.⁴

Oxford Church historian R. W. Southern wrote:

No one in the West denied that the pope possessed all the authority of St Peter over the church. The derivation of the pope's authority seemed one of the clearest facts of history. The descent of this authority could be traced step by step from the earliest days without any of the shadows of ambiguity or ignorance that trouble a modern observer. . . . From the beginning St Peter and his successors could be seen at work directing the church, instituting ceremonies, defining discipline, founding bishoprics. This scheme of things had the same unambiguous clarity as the generations of mankind from Adam.⁵

³ This chapter is written in the format of my book *The One-Minute Apologist* (Manchester, New Hampshire: Sophia Institute Press, 2007), vaguely reminiscent of St. Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologica*.

⁴ J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1978), 417.

⁵ R. W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1970), 94.

Catholic Priestly Celibacy

PROTESTANT. Enforced celibacy of the priesthood is unscriptural.

DAVE ARMSTRONG. Thus you prove you are of the sort who couldn't receive the saying of Jesus when He said:

Matthew 19:12: For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to receive this, let him receive it.

PROTESTANT. The key word is *enforced*. Matthew 19:12 speaks of voluntary celibacy.

D. A. It's not enforced if we simply choose from among those men who have been called to it. The Catholic Church (i.e., Latin Rite, because not all our rites have this requirement) says, "We want our priests to come from that class of men who have been called by God to be celibate." This is quite biblical. Paul talks about single men who can offer undistracted devotion to the Lord, in 1 Corinthians 7. So we say: "We want to draw our priests from that pool." Completely biblical, completely sensible.

PROTESTANT. So, you tell a man who is married, or desires to be married, and wants to give his life to ministry, "Tough luck, buddy"?

D. A. No. We say, "Many of our rites allow married priests; perhaps you would consider one of those, or the diaconate." There are many ministries in the Church; lots of things to do. I am a married apologist and evangelist and have been so full-time for almost thirteen years. Marriage hasn't stopped me from following my calling.

In any event, it does no good to run down a way of life that is so highly honored in Scripture (John the Baptist, Jesus, most of the disciples, the eunuchs Jesus refers to, the single men referred to in 1 Corinthians 7).

Protestants who argue as you do usually object to celibacy because they think celibacy is impossible (as Luther and Calvin virtually argued). They don't have enough faith in God's power and grace. We do. Those of you who don't "get" it, don't get those passages and examples in the Bible. You don't

follow the teachings of *all* of the Bible.

The Celibate Priesthood as a Higher Calling

How do we tie the married priesthood (in Eastern Catholicism and Orthodoxy) into the evangelical counsels? Doesn't the Church teach that it is a higher calling to renounce marriage for the sake of ministry (and yes, "undistracted devotion to the Lord": 1 Corinthians 7)?

Doesn't the Church teach that consecrated virginity or celibacy is a higher state of life than marriage, per the evangelical counsels? My understanding is that it does. If that is true in general, then I submit that the general principle would apply to priests as a particular manifestation of it.

It's like abstinence and fasting, which are spiritually helpful. Thus, if one gives up marriage and its gifts in order to be more fully devoted to the Lord, that too is a higher state.

In other words, married priesthood is very good; celibate priesthood is better.

Married folks can do much in the Church. I serve the Church as a full-time apologist. But I could do a lot *more* apologetics and evangelism if I were single.

St. Paul was a priest and a model for us. Now, in 1 Corinthians 9:5, he states: "Do we not have the right to be accompanied by a wife, as the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?" And he goes on to argue in the same passage that the spiritual worker earns his wages, is worthy of his wages. But he also writes:

1 Corinthians 9:15-19: But I have made no use of any of these rights, nor am I writing this to secure any such provision. For I would rather die than have any one deprive me of my ground for boasting. For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a commission. What then is my reward? Just this: that in my preaching I may make the gospel free of charge, not making full use of my right in the gospel. For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a

slave to all, that I might win the more.

He specifically renounces marriage and even remuneration, although he says he has a right to both, for the sake of the gospel. Now, based on that, I conclude that it is more commendable and “higher” for St. Paul to have done that, compared with the next priest over who does *not* do it. It’s a higher calling for him to renounce having a wife, so that he may “win the more,” as he says.

Given Paul’s argument, can we say that what he did was no higher or more commendable in his calling than the others who didn’t take his “extra” step (the evangelical counsels)? And, of course, St. Peter and others also left their wives for the express sake of ministry. We know that because it is expressly *stated*:

Luke 18:28-30: And Peter said, “Lo, we have left our homes and followed you.” And he said to them, “Truly, I say to you, there is no man who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive manifold more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life.”

We know Peter was married. He left “everything.” Unless he was already a widower, he renounced marriage for the sake of his ministry. Why? Why should he do that, or have to do it in any sense? Why didn’t Jesus say, “Well, hey, you can be married and come along with us, Simon. No problem!”? I say it was because it was presupposed that singleness was a superior state from which to engage in full-time Christian ministry and (eventually) priesthood.

I don’t deny that a married priest can be a great priest. I know some wonderful married priests myself, even in the Latin Rite. But I deny that celibacy is not a higher calling than marriage, based on:

- the evangelical counsels
- Paul’s reasoning in 1 Corinthians 7 and 9
- Jesus’ reasoning about the voluntary eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom (Matt. 19)
- the motif of leaving one’s family, including, seemingly, wives, for the sake of the kingdom

If St. Paul’s was a “higher calling,” that seals my argument as to the higher

calling of a celibate priesthood. If it was a higher calling for *him*, then it is a higher calling for *any* priest who does the same (since Paul often says that we should imitate him). So the Latin Rite says, “We are drawing exclusively from that pool of men who have already been called by God to the celibate life, and we think that is very good — preferable — for the sake of undistracted devotion.”

The example of Paul in 1 Corinthians 9 specifically ties in the priesthood and celibacy, because he was a priest. Thus, advocates for the Eastern Catholic or Orthodox system of mostly married priests can’t retort that 1 Corinthians 7 isn’t about priests (or that the eunuch of Matthew 19 isn’t about priests). It’s a clear example of a priest’s saying he has renounced marriage for the sake of ministry. It seems plainly “higher” to me.

Based on how St. Paul argues it, he appears to assume that it would apply widely as a spiritual principle. Paul says that he specifically renounced what was his “right” in order to produce more spiritual fruit: to “win all the more.” It’s a direct causation for him: voluntarily renouncing remuneration and the married life means more fruit in his ministry.

A New Argument for Mandatory Priestly Celibacy?

I was curious about the approximate percentage of Eastern Orthodox and Eastern Catholic priests who are celibate (i.e., those who are celibate in an environment where a married priesthood is allowed). My thought was that if celibacy is so valued in “non-Latin” Christianity, as is claimed, we should expect to see a significant number (maybe one-quarter?, one-third?) of celibate clergy (since they are given the choice). If not, then it seems reasonable to conclude that it is relatively *less* valued, so that among these priests, the percentage who opt for marriage would be scarcely distinguishable from that of the general public.

And that in turn (if true) would be another argument in favor of mandatory celibacy, since if it isn’t required, then what Paul recommended as a preferred state for clergy will quickly become a rarity. Human nature seems to teach us that what is very difficult usually won’t be chosen unless it is mandatory in some sense. Hence, we have the explicitly biblical notion of the evangelical counsels.

Among statistics I could find, I discovered that about 91 percent (575 of 630) of active Greek Orthodox priests in the United States were married. According to another study, 93 percent of all Orthodox priests in America were married. Assuming the accuracy of this survey, about one in ten Orthodox priests (at least those in America) feel called to a celibate state.

Therefore, I would conclude from the statistics that celibacy is greatly undervalued in Orthodoxy among the class of clergy; otherwise it would be practiced by more than only 7 to 10 percent of all Orthodox clergy. The state in life that St. Paul taught was preferable in terms of undistracted devotion to the Lord occurs far less among Eastern Orthodox clergy, because it is not required. The result becomes like the situation in Protestantism: clergy are allowed to marry, so virtually all do, and those who don’t are too often regarded with suspicion. I think this is human nature: if an easier path is allowed, almost all take it, whereas difficult things need to be required.

Latin rite Catholicism thinks celibacy is so praiseworthy and honorable that it chooses to draw its priests almost exclusively from the class of men who

agree with Paul and follow one of the evangelical counsels as regards their own calling in life. I've never understood the objection to this (even when I was an evangelical Protestant I understood the reasoning of it).

What would be the reply to this line of argumentation? One "solution" or middle course (I don't advocate it myself; I'm just thinking theoretically) might be to have a clergy that is (deliberately, by requirement) 50 percent celibate and 50 percent married, so that both callings are equally valued in practice. Otherwise it seems to be an all-or-nothing situation: 99 percent celibate clergy (a few exceptions for Anglican clergy converts, et cetera) or 90 to 93 percent married clergy. If the statistics are similar in Eastern Catholic clergy (as I strongly suspect will be the case), my point is strengthened.

An Orthodox Christian in a Facebook thread denied that there was an innate relationship between celibacy and the priesthood. But if this is so, why (if there is not at least a strong correlation) were Jesus and all the disciples either not married or married (like Peter) with an agreement to leave their wives for the sake of ministry, with Jesus actually referring to those who have left wives or families for His sake (Luke 18:29)?

Between that and St. Paul's strong teaching in 1 Corinthians 7, do we not see a sort of biblical / apostolic preference toward the state of celibacy for clergy? Of course, the ones who are celibate for the sake of the kingdom come from a small "pool," but then priests are very extraordinary and exceptional men, so I would fully expect them to come from a small and very special subclass of men in the first place.

There are plenty of opportunities for married ministry. One can be a deacon or a director of religious education or a youth pastor or a teacher in a Catholic school. These roles don't require looking after an entire parish. It's very difficult to balance that and a family. Just ask children of Protestant pastors how that often works out. People can do only so much.

Of course no one should be a celibate priest unless he is called to it. This is self-evident. Existing problems do not cast doubt on the principle — only on the selection process. We draw our priests from a smaller group of men than Orthodoxy does. The goal and task is to find holy men who truly are called to the priesthood and / or to celibacy. This is of supreme importance, given the sexual scandals and heterodoxy that have occurred.

I don't see why the Latin system of required priestly celibacy should so

often be disparaged. There is biblical support for it. Catholicism as a whole has both traditions (since Eastern Catholicism allows a married clergy) and values diversity of opinion and practice.

It all goes back to the selection process. If we agree that celibate priests and married priests are both valid, then the Catholic (Latin) Church has to make sure that candidates for the priesthood are called to celibacy, and Orthodoxy has to make sure that a married priest can handle both family and Church responsibilities. These are two very different sets of capabilities and personal needs.

Works Can Be Good or Bad, Just Like Traditions

The author of Hebrews makes this distinction:

Bad Works

Hebrews 6:1: Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God.

Hebrews 9:14: [H]ow much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works?

Good Works

Hebrews 6:10: For God is not so unjust as to overlook your work and the love which you showed for his sake in serving the saints, as you still do.

Hebrews 10:24: [L]et us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works.

Hebrews 13:20-21: May the God of peace . . . equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Revelation 3:2 offers a similar treatment: “I have not found your works perfect in the sight of my God.”

The phrase “good works” is also found in Matthew 5:16; John 10:32; Acts 9:36; and Ephesians 2:10.

Faith and Works

Isaiah 1 provides a case study in taking passages out of context to bolster preconceived notions. Ironically, it was a longtime Baptist friend of mine who called my attention to this. (He's a good Protestant — in no “danger” of becoming Catholic — but unlike many Protestants, he doesn't try to omit the importance of good works in the Christian life.) The passage usually cited by Protestants is Isaiah 1:18:

*Come now, let us reason together,
says the LORD*

*though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red like crimson,
they shall become like wool.*

This is reminiscent of Psalm 51:2, 7, 9-10 and King David's repentance:

*Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin! . . .
Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. . . .
Hide thy face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.
Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.*

Protestants (of a certain sort) don't and won't hesitate to cite the Old Testament as authoritative if they think a passage *supports* their theology. When it doesn't, they tend to dismiss it as irrelevant, because, well, it is the *Old* Testament. Quite often (if not, typically), evangelical and Reformed and fundamentalist Protestants cite Isaiah 1:18 in isolation as a prooftext for one-time justification or instant salvation, or both.

When we examine the context, we see that works are part and parcel of what is being dealt with. The immediate context is most striking (and jolting for those who hold to Protestant soteriology). Here are the two verses

preceding Isaiah 1:18:

*Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;
remove the evil of your doings
from before my eyes;
cease to do evil,
learn to do good;
seek justice,
correct oppression;
defend the fatherless,
plead for the widow. (cf. Isa. 1:23)*

Isn't it fascinating how God, through His prophet, includes the *actions of the penitent* in the whole equation? Protestants tell us nothing can be done by man prior to justification (what many of them equate with a "salvation" that can't ever be lost once truly granted). We agree with them, insofar as we are talking about initial justification or regeneration. Those are entirely works of God's grace, and this is the clear teaching of the Council of Trent.

But then, the context of this passage doesn't fit into that scenario. Here, man is clearly *doing* something — quite a bit — and it can't be separated from God's pardon. Catholics simply say that it may be an instance of justification after the time of initial justification, because we don't think justification is a one-time thing. Protestants will have to offer some other explanation concerning the context or cease using Isaiah 1:18 as a prooftext for justification (as they define it).

God says, "Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean" and two verses later, we see the result: "your sins . . . shall be as white as snow." But Protestants want to ignore all the actions of men in the overall passage. In Isaiah 1:17, God talks about a bunch of works: doing good, seeking justice, battling oppression, helping fatherless children and widows . . . How reminiscent this is of the judgment passages, where Jesus says that the key to salvation is not faith alone, but rather, works:

Matthew 25:34-36: Then the King will say to those at his right hand, "Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me."

The same things (works and obedience) are seen in the two passages following 1:18:

*If you are willing and obedient,
you shall eat the good of the land;
But if you refuse and rebel,
you shall be devoured by the sword;
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.*

Everything is conditional. It's the furthest thing from an irrevocable, unconditional promise. The entire chapter is about the nation of Israel, but generally such passages are regarded as having a double application to the Christian believer (as God's "chosen," et cetera). How about Isaiah 1:27? Does it talk about faith alone as the prerequisite of justification and one-time salvation? Hardly:

*Zion shall be redeemed by justice,
and those in her who repent, by righteousness.*

Redeemed by "justice"? "Redeem" and "redemption" are good Protestant words, and they refer to *God's actions only*, not our own. But there it is in front of our face.

It's the same everywhere in the chapter. There is no respite for the Protestant who dares to read the whole thing, and to interpret 1:18 in context, rather than atomistically isolated, as if it were merely a saying on a poster, to be repeated without any examination.

*Ah, sinful nation,
a people laden with iniquity,
offspring of evildoers,
sons who deal corruptly!
They have forsaken the LORD,
they have despised the Holy One of Israel,
they are utterly estranged.*

If Israel represents the individual sinner or the Christian, here we have a nation (by double application, person) that once knew the Lord but no longer does. You can't "forsake" something or someone without having formerly followed him or it. Yet by Calvinist and Baptist and evangelical "perseverance" and "eternal security" thinking, this is not *possible*. One can't fall away. Grace is irresistible, and election is unconditional. Thus we have to

choose between what the Bible teaches and what *men* teach, in *contradiction* of it.

Under Catholic principles, on the other hand, no problem at all! Men can fall away from grace and be restored to it through repentance and absolution and additional justification. Our view is perfectly consistent with what we find here.

Prayer and worship and rituals and calling on God for salvation are worthless unless we repent from the heart and indicate it by our good works:

*Bring no more vain offerings;
incense is an abomination to me.
New moon and sabbath and the calling of assemblies —
I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly.
Your new moons and your appointed feasts
my soul hates;
they have become a burden to me,
I am weary of bearing them.
When you spread forth your hands,
I will hide my eyes from you;
even though you make many prayers,
I will not listen;
your hands are full of blood.*

Here as everywhere in Scripture, faith and works are together. Man cooperates with God after receiving initial justification and regeneration (which come *entirely* by God's grace).

Belief in Jesus Requires Obedience to Him

John 3:36: He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him.

“Believes” here in the Greek original is *pistuo*, and the Greek for “does not obey” is *apeitheo*. Belief and obedience are, then, presented as essentially identical. To believe in Christ *is* to obey Him. To disobey Him is to be subject to God’s wrath. St. Peter, in 1 Peter 2:7, makes the same comparison, with the same two Greek words. Thus, by this understanding, *pistuo* elsewhere in Scripture is harmonious with the Catholic view of infused justification.

Apeitheo (Strong’s word no. 544) can indeed mean “disobey” or “disobedient” as *Strong’s Concordance* notes. That’s precisely why the Revised Standard Version translates it as “not obey” at John 3:36, whereas the King James Version (KJV) has “believeth not.” But the KJV also translates it as “disobedient” in 1 Peter 2:7.

Many translators have thought that the usage here was the concept of disobedience and not merely the refusal to give assent. It was also translated “obeyeth not” in the revised version of the KJV. What do other translators think? Here are many non-Catholic versions that render the term in the sense of “disobey”:

- **NEB, REB, NRSV, Goodspeed, Moffatt, TEV:** disobeys the Son
- **Living Bible:** don’t believe and obey him
- **NIV:** rejects the Son
- **NASB:** does not obey the Son
- **Beck:** will not listen to the Son
- **Amplified:** disobeys — is unbelieving toward, refuses to trust in, disregards, is not subject to — the Son
- **CEV:** rejects him
- **ASV:** obeyeth not

Also, Gerhard Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (one-volume edition) states that *apeitheo* in John 3:36 means "disobeying the Son" (p. 820). Cognate words *apeithes* and *apeitheia* mean "unworthy of belief," then "disobedient" and "disobedience," respectively (pp. 819-820).

As for *pistuo*, the work states:

[P]isteuo as "to obey." Heb. 11 stresses that to believe is to obey, as in the OT. Paul in Rom. 1:8; 1 Th. 1:8 (cf. Rom. 15:18; 16:19) shows, too, that believing means obeying. he speaks about the obedience of faith in Rom. 1:5, and cf. 10:3; 2 Cor. 9:13. (p. 854)

Since faith involves confession and obedience, it is a state as well as an act. . . . There is a work of faith (1 Th. 1:3); it works by love (Gal. 5:6). This work stands in contrast to the works of the law. (p. 855)

The argument proceeds from language (the meaning of Greek words), context, internal parallelism, and cross reference or external parallelism.

Faith Calls for Confidence and Perseverance

RSV: For we share in Christ, if only we hold our first confidence firm to the end.

KJV: For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.

Moffatt: For we only participate in Christ provided that we keep firm to the very end the confidence with which we started.

Revised Fundamentalist Version (tongue-in-cheek): For we believe in and proclaim Christ only if we make a firm one-time commitment and altar call with which we start and end.

The passage is a goldmine of Catholic theology. It starts out with a seeming allusion to theosis, or profound union with God: a doctrine emphasized by the Orthodox but perfectly Catholic and biblical as well. Then we have the conditional *if* and *only* in some versions: this union or final salvation occurs only if we continue to the end. It's not guaranteed and perfectly known henceforth, in an instant.

Then we have the notion of synergy or cooperation, coworking with God, by His grace. *We* have something to do; we're not passive. We have to keep firm and confident. Our starting proclamation has to be vigilantly maintained. Salvation is a process, not a moment.

To summarize:

1. Theosis.
2. Conditional salvation is based on whether we persevere in what we proclaim; not instant salvation.
3. Cooperation or collaborating with God and His grace in order to persevere.
4. Salvation is a process.
5. We are assured ("confident") of our salvation, yet we must laboriously keep and maintain such assurance.
6. In other words, salvation or being in God's good grace can be lost.

That's what "if " and "only" and "keep firm" and "unto the end" are all about.

Neither eternal security, nor the Calvinist perseverance of the saints, nor a denial of human free will to cooperate in the salvation wrought ultimately (as both enabling and final cause) by God's grace, nor a bald assent of faith without action, nor any notion of instant, one-time salvation can be squared with this passage at all.

I'm not "coming up" with this; it's God's revelation. One can accept the teaching it gives us here and in many, many other places, or reject it, miserably slogging along with mere false traditions of men, made up out of whole cloth, rather than from the inspired Bible.

The “Unanswered” Prayers of Jesus

A Reformed Baptist (Calvinist) argued that if Christ in fact died for all men, rather than the elect only (as Calvinists hold), this would result in His interceding in heaven as high priest for those He knows (in His omniscience and perfect foreknowledge) will reject Him and go to hell.

It would then follow that His intercession failed, or (if there is any difference) was unanswered — an unthinkable state of affairs for God.

The reply to this is, I think, simple: yes, Christ’s intercession failed, in the cases of those who went to hell, because human free will trumps even God’s will (by God’s own design). Hence, Calvinism denies free will as well (in effect, futilely to try to overcome this difficulty).

Once that goes, then whatever Jesus prays for in terms of men would inevitably happen, and that is what creates the intended supposed “dilemma” for the person who holds to universal atonement (as virtually all Christians besides Calvinists do).

God allows things to happen that go against His perfect will. The devil’s (and demons’) own fall from grace is an example. I imagine that Jesus, who is eternal, prayed to the Father for Lucifer at one time, since he was God’s greatest creation. The fall of man is another (most Calvinists no longer being Supralapsarian — which means believing that God preordained the Fall of man — though I have argued that Calvin himself was).

Jesus chose Judas to be His disciple. He prayed for him, no doubt, as He did for all the other disciples, but Judas’s free will couldn’t be overcome (lest it not be free will at all).

Here are two examples from Scripture of Jesus’ willing one thing (and in one case, praying for it), and men willing another thing, and (guess what?) the rebellious will prevails:

Matthew 23:37: O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often *would* I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you *would not*! (cf. Luke 13:34)

Jesus prayed specifically that His followers “may be one, even as we [He and the Father] are one” (John 17:11) and “that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee” (John 17:21), and again, “one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one” (John 17:22-23).

Clearly, Christians fall far short (abominably short) of what Jesus intended for this prayer (again, out of our free will to sin and not follow His desires and commands), so it is equally plainly a failed prayer.

Jesus prayed that His disciples would be one. We’re not. We will be one in heaven, but not on earth. His overall providence doesn’t fail, because it incorporates within itself our free-will responses, including rejections of His perfect will. But individual prayers fail if their aim is not met: even for Jesus.

Likewise, God can’t do some things, even though He is omnipotent. They have to be logically *possible*. For example, He can’t make a square circle or make two plus two equal five. He can’t obliterate Himself out of existence or make Himself noneternal.

This is what lies behind the old atheist challenge: “Can God make a rock so heavy that He couldn’t lift it?” He cannot do so; not because He is not omnipotent (able to do all that is *possible* to do), but because no weight is too heavy for Him to “lift”: therefore there is no such rock that He can create. It’s *logical* impossibility; not a disproof of His omnipotence. But the atheist is counting on us not to recognize the necessary distinctions (or, more likely, he does not grasp them himself).

Jesus prayed, “My Father, if it be *possible*, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matt. 26:39). But it *wasn’t* possible, because some things aren’t possible even for God. In this instance it wasn’t possible for Jesus to avoid the Passion.

2 Peter 3:9: The Lord is not slow about his promise as some count slowness, but is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

But we know that not all reach repentance. Damned folks go to hell. We know that for sure because Scripture mentions it in several places (see, e.g., Matt. 5:22; 10:28; Matt. 23:33; 25:41).

Therefore, God’s desire, which for Him is the same as a prayer because He knows all at once, is not fulfilled in its goal (the salvation of all). It can’t be,

given human free will, which He allowed to be present. God gives all men sufficient grace to be saved, but that can be rejected and is, *in fact*, by the reprobate.

Some try to argue that Jesus' prayer for Christian unity in John 17 is answered in heaven, but the context (which has nothing to do with perfection in heaven, but rather, life in this world, with all its problems) utterly rules that out as an explanation:

John 17:11: And now I am no more in the world, but *they are in the world*, and I am coming to thee. Holy Father, keep them in thy name, which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.

John 17:15: I do not pray that thou shouldst take them out of the *world*, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil one.

John 17:17: Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth.

No more sanctification takes place in heaven.

John 17:18: As thou didst send me into the world, so I have sent them into the *world*.

In each case, the context is in the world.

John 17:2: that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the *world* may believe that thou hast sent me.

John 17:23: I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the *world* may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me.

The previous two passages can't possibly apply to the afterlife, because they have to do with *witness*. *If* they are one in the world, the world will believe in Jesus as a result of observing them.

We thus conclude from the previous passages:

1. Can God will one thing without its coming to pass? Matthew 23:37 shows that this can indeed happen. So does 2 Peter 3:9, where God desires that none perish, yet many do and go to hell.
2. Can something that Jesus prays for not happen? John 17 shows this, and the Calvinist's exegesis is utterly implausible and takes no account of the entire repeated context, which has to do with the world, not the final state.

There are some things that even God can't do. He can't force a person to believe with his free will opposed, because the two notions are incompatible. But He can give everyone enough grace to be saved, and they have it in order to cooperate with their free will.

God doesn't predestine people to hell, though (only to heaven). That is Calvinist heresy. And so the people in hell run counter to God's desire (in Scripture) that none perish.

It was virtually impossible for Jesus' prayer in John 17 to have been realized, given human sin. By allowing human free will, God allows into the universe sins that are not in accord with His perfect will. And He can't make a man with free will unfree by forcing him to be good and righteous and nonrebellious.

St. John vs. John Calvin on Limited Atonement

John 12:32: [A]nd I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.

If Jesus died only for the elect (those who are saved in the end), what does it mean here that all men are drawn to Him? It makes no sense. Those who are “totally depraved” in Reformed / Calvinist thought (the *T* in TULIP) would not be drawn at all. There’s no reason to be drawn to Christ in this thinking, since there is no hope whatsoever of being saved, if Christ died only for the elect (limited atonement, or the *L* in TULIP) and not all men.

Moreover, according to the Calvinist notion of irresistible grace (the *I* in TULIP, contra the free will of man) if a man were drawn to Christ, that would already necessarily be grace moving him in that direction (as all Christians agree: God always *starts* the process), and according to Calvinism he wouldn’t be able to *resist* it. Yet we know people *do* resist this grace (even accept it and later fall away from or reject it) and are damned.

The passage makes perfect sense, on the other hand, and is coherent within the paradigms of Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant Arminian / Wesleyan free-will soteriology, but not in Calvinist soteriology. Jesus died for all and offers sufficient grace for anyone to be saved, if he would but accept this free gift of grace. But many reject it.

How does John Calvin interpret the passage? I suspected, before I looked at it, that Calvin would merely play with the word *all* and make out that it doesn’t really mean *all*. It doesn’t fly. He’s unsuccessful. Here’s what he wrote, in his *Commentaries*:

The word “all,” which he employs, must be understood to refer to the children of God, who belong to his flock. Yet I agree with Chrysostom, who says that Christ used the universal term, “all,” because the Church was to be gathered equally from among Gentiles and Jews.

As usual with Calvin, however (and habitually with anti-Catholics today), he selectively cites the Fathers according to his ends. St. John Chrysostom, of course, believed in universal atonement:

Now if all have sinned, how come some to be saved, and some to perish? It is because all were not minded to come to Him, since for His part all were saved, for all were called. (Homily XVI on Romans 9:1: v. 9:10; NPNF1-11)

God, however, being very good, shows the same kindness to both. For it was not those in a state of salvation only to whom He showed mercy, but also Pharaoh, as far as His part went. For of the same long-suffering, both they and he had the advantage. And if he was not saved, it was quite owing to his own will: since, as for what concerneth God, he had as much done for him as they who were saved. (Homily XVI on Romans 9:1: v. 9:22-24; NPNF1-11)

So he says here also, “For the same Lord over all is rich unto all (and upon all).” (Rom. iii. 22.) You see how he sets Him forth as exceedingly desiring our salvation, since He even reckons this to be riches to Himself; so that they are not even now to despair, or fancy that, provided they would repent, they were unpardonable. For He who considereth it as riches to Himself to save us, will not cease to be rich. Since even this is riches, the fact of the gift being shed forth unto all. . . . “For whosoever,” he says, “believeth on Him shall not be ashamed” (Is. xxviii. 16); and, “Whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved.” (Joel ii. 32.) (Homily XVII on Romans 10:1: v. 10:11-13; NPNF1-11)

Ver. 6. “Who gave Himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time.” Was Christ then a ransom for the Heathen? Undoubtedly Christ died even for Heathen; . . . (Homily VII on 1 Timothy, v. 2:6; NPNF1-13)

He came for the salvation of all. (Homily LVII on John, v. 9:8-9; NPNF1-14)

God Does Not Predestine the Damned

2 Thessalonians 2:10-11: and with all wicked deception for those who are to perish, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore God sends upon them a strong delusion, to make them believe what is false.

They perish (i.e., suffer eternal damnation) “because” they refused to love the truth (the gospel, the revelation of Jesus) that would save them. They had free will and rejected the truth. *Then* God sent them delusion, to believe falsehood. It wasn’t God at first who made them believe what is false so they wouldn’t be saved. No, *they* chose that, and God accepted their free choice, even though it meant damnation for them.

This takes out the predestination of the damned (standard Calvinist belief), limited atonement, and irresistible grace (a denial of man’s ability to reject the grace that God sends), because God’s sending the delusion is dependent on the free decisions of men; it’s not a decree for all eternity that So-and-so will be damned no matter what he does.

The next verse (2 Thess. 2:12) states: “so that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” When they didn’t believe the truth, when they still had a chance to be saved, this was their undoing (“because” in that verse).

Then God sent the delusion (v. 11), and the text then reiterates (v. 12) that they are condemned because they refused to believe the truth; *not* because God made it impossible from the outset for them to do so (i.e., predestination of the reprobate, wholly apart from their free choices). They refused it before it was made impossible for them to accept it, by God’s decree.

God *does* give *every* person every chance to repent and believe. This is referring to those who are absolutely opposed to God’s grace; intransigent, dead-set against God. God knows who will be that way (being omniscient and outside of time, and knowing all things that are still future to us), and so there comes a point where He gives them over to their sin, which is what this passage is talking about (similar to Romans 1:18-27). It is God

acknowledging that some men freely reject Him; He honors their free will, but He judges, too.

Nothing here should be troubling at all. It shows that we have free will and that God's grace is always available if we will but accept it and cease our foolish rebellion. "You can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink." That is like our free will; God won't force us to drink. But His grace and salvation are *there* for us to accept and appropriate in our lives.

Prayer, Penance, and the Eternal Destiny of Others

Someone asked me whether a person could theoretically go to hell because others didn't pray for him or didn't pray enough, so that he didn't repent, and noted that this would seem unfair for God to "allow." The questioner was assuming several things here that do not follow.

First, it's not a matter of God's "allowing" someone to go to hell (as if He were to blame for it). If anyone goes to hell, it is because he *wanted* to live without God. As C. S. Lewis wrote with great insight, "The doors of hell are locked on the inside."⁶

Second, all grace, including grace conveyed through prayer, comes from God. Since God knows everything (including even possibilities and contingencies and all possible outcomes), if He foreknew that Person A would not pray for someone else, He could easily "arrange" things in His providence so that Person B would do so.

Third, in the final analysis, whether we are saved will always depend on God's grace, but it is our decision whether to *accept* this grace. The grace will be provided. It doesn't *ultimately* depend on another person, so that if *he* fails, *we* go to hell. It just doesn't work that way. That would be contrary to God's mercy, to let eternal salvation rest on the weak reed of third parties.

The proper way to express our choice with regard to eternal destiny would be to say (using myself): "Dave did not accept the grace and the free option of going to heaven that God provided for him, and so he went to hell." We all stand before God alone, in the end, as many old folk songs point out, such as: "You got to walk that lonesome valley by yourself."

We mustn't confine ourselves to a merely human way of looking at things. God has a completely different perspective (as revealed in Holy Scripture).

Who is saved and who is damned is not in our hands. We can help provide the avenues of grace and blessing that God has for each individual, but each one's final destiny rests with him and God. We are to pray, do good works, love, do penance on behalf of others, listen, assist, and share the Good News at every reasonable opportunity.

Then we know that we are fulfilling our responsibility and holding up our end of the bargain, so to speak. The good things we do can make the (Christian) path *easier* for others to follow, but they do not *determine* others' paths, let alone whether others go to heaven or hell.

Books such as Proverbs and Psalms present a stark contrast between the “evil, wicked fools” and the “righteous” and the “wise.” That’s proverbial language, though, which intends to convey generalities. We all know that we are quite the mixture of good and evil and often are more like shades of gray rather than pure and righteous and holy versus utterly evil and wicked. Alexander Solzhenitsyn, the famous Orthodox writer and dissident against Communism stated that “the line between good and evil runs through every human heart.”

It is the extreme contrast that is the motivational tool to reform behavior and to express the *urgency* and importance of action on behalf of others. In this matter, there is indeed a relationship between our prayers and graces always caused and offered by God through us to others. The same applies to penitential works and even suffering (redemptive suffering).

God designed things that way, so that we can all be involved in the marvelous process of His graces. He wanted salvation and redemption to be a community or organic effort, not the effort of a bunch of atomistic individuals. We help each other. We are our brothers' keepers.

I think we can, therefore, quite possibly interpret this aspect of the message of Fátima (perhaps in part, at the least) as: “If *no one* prays for a soul, that soul will go to hell.” But that is at bottom a *collective* notion: “every soul needs the assistance of prayer [general]; therefore *you* [particular; part of the collective] should pray.”

It doesn't logically follow, however, that if we as *individuals* fail to pray for an *individual person*, that person will go to hell, because, as I noted before, God in His Providence will simply cause or urge *another* person to do so.

And even then, a person could receive all kinds of graces through prayer and whatnot, yet still reject God and salvation, because God gave us the free will to do so, so that following Him would be a meaningful choice, not a question of God's pressing a button and our not being able to refuse, as if we were robots.

After all, Satan himself was in heaven with God and had everything he could possibly need or want. But he wanted to be *in God's place*, so it wasn't enough for him. Causation in such matters of final salvation is not strictly a matter of us (i.e., we as individuals) and them.

Or, on a more human level: we have all seen families where two children were raised the same way, yet one rebels and gets into heavy sin, while the other stays faithful to the Church and Christian moral teachings. Free will: both were given the same "graces" so to speak, by the parents, but the outcome was different because *they* decided in the end which way they would go.

The final destiny of the person rests on his acceptance or rejection of God and His grace. We know that God predestines those who will be saved, to salvation, yet (paradoxically) not without their choice and free assent. How this works out in fine detail is a matter of debate in Catholic theology, between Thomists and Molinists. But in Catholic teaching (in contrast to Calvinist), He predestines no one to hell.

⁵ C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 130.

Biblical Support for Lent

My specialty as an apologist is biblical arguments for Catholicism. I enjoy that aspect of my work a lot because the Bible is the great “common ground” for all Christians (and I strive to be ecumenical). We all reverence Sacred Scripture and believe it is inspired revelation. Along these lines, someone asked me a few years ago on my Facebook page: “How come we celebrate Lent when the word is not in Scripture?”

Trinity (that is, the *word*) is not in Scripture either. Christian church buildings are not in the New Testament at all; it describes Christians as meeting in homes. The term *original sin* is not in the Bible (whereas the concept *is*), nor is the word *theology*.

The Bible never refers explicitly to evangelical “staples” such as the “altar call” or “a personal relationship with Jesus” or “have you accepted Jesus into your heart?” or many other ways of describing things in the Christian life that lots of people probably assume are in there somewhere (sort of like all the ingredients in a tasty vegetable soup).

But the *practices* and *beliefs* regarding Lent (as with these other topics) are, assuredly, eminently biblical. In other words, we can confidently assert (especially when challenged a bit) that if we truly want to be biblical Christians and fully conform our lives to scriptural guidelines and models, Lent (or something similar to it) will be part of our walk with Christ.

Fasting and abstinence, central practices during Lent (*Lent* comes from the Old English word for “spring”), are quite biblical activities. The evidence is extensive — largely from the Old Testament, but also in the New. Here is just a small sampling:

Ezra 8:21: Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from him a straight way. (cf. Ezra 8:23; 9:5)

Nehemiah 9:1: [T]he people of Israel were assembled with fasting and in sackcloth, and with earth upon their heads. (Ash Wednesday!)

Psalms 69:10: I humbled my soul with fasting.

Luke 2:37: She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day.

Luke 7:33: For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine; and you say, “He has a demon.” (cf. Matt. 11:18; Luke 1:15)

Acts 13:2-3: While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

Romans 14:3: Let not him who eats despise him who abstains, and let not him who abstains pass judgment on him who eats; for God has welcomed him.

Jesus assumes that fasting will be a regular part of the Christian’s life, when He says, “And *when* you fast . . .” (Matt. 6:16; repeated in 6:17).

The forty (or so) days of Lenten observance have several parallels in Holy Scripture: Moses’ fasts on the holy mountain (Exod. 24:18; 34:28; Deut. 9:9) and his intercession for Israel (Deut. 9:25); Elijah’s journey to Mount Horeb (1 Kings 19:8); Ezekiel’s lying on one side (Ezek. 4:6); and Christ’s fast in the wilderness (Matt. 4:2).

The premise underlying all these practices is *mortification*: the subduing of the body (or, in a similar sense, the “flesh” against the spirit) for spiritual purposes. This is controversial among some, yet it has an explicit biblical basis as well, particularly in this passage from St. Paul:

1 Corinthians 9:27: but I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

Other Bible versions translate *pommel* as “beat,” “bruise,” “beating and bruising,” “batter,” “buffet,” “punish,” and “discipline.” The Goodspeed translation reads: “I beat and bruise my body and make it my slave.” Commentators dispute precisely what St. Paul *means*, and the Catholic position does not absolutely require only one interpretation of this passage.

But in any event, even if it is merely metaphorical, it fits into the overall scriptural theme of self-sacrifice, as outlined earlier; therefore, it is expressing a principle or premise regarding some sort of asceticism or what we might call self-discipline, however it is specifically interpreted.

Bottom line: what Catholics and other Christians observe during Lent is

altogether in line with biblical teaching. Those Christians who don't "do" Lent (like me for my first thirty-two years, though I would fast at times) miss out on these important penitential aspects of the Faith and the spiritual blessings and graces obtained therein. What we find in inspired Scripture (especially if it is repeated many times) is important and is intended by God for our spiritual well-being.

Divine Chastisement (or, Purgatory in *This* Life)

I've often used what I call the nutshell argument for purgatory: we must be without sin to enter into God's presence (Eph. 5:5; Heb. 12:14; Rev. 21:27; 22:3, 14-15). Therefore, God must purge or wash away our sin to make us fit to be in heaven with Him. All agree so far.

The only disagreement is whether this "divine cleansing" takes place in an instant or is more of a process. It's merely a quantitative difference, not an essential one. Purgatory is indicated most directly in 1 Corinthians 3:13-15: "[T]he fire will test what sort of work each one has done."

I'd like to examine, however, the notion that this same purging process takes place *before* we die, and not just after — the very common biblical theme of God's chastising or purifying His people.

St. Catherine of Genoa wrote: "How much better is it to be cleansed here than in the other life! For whoever suffers purgation in this life pays but a small portion of what is due, by reason of the liberty of his free-will cooperating with infused grace" (*Spiritual Dialogue*, pt. 2, chap. 2). Her point was that we receive graces and merit during life that are no longer available in purgatory. Therefore, it is preferable to undergo the necessary purification before death rather than after. This is a great and helpful insight for the Christian life, and it's massively supported in the Bible.

Scripture refers to a purging fire: whatever "shall pass through the fire" will be made "clean" (Num. 31:23); "we went through fire" (Ps. 66:12); "our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29).

The Bible makes frequent use also of the metaphor of various metals being refined (in a fire): "[W]hen he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10); "[T]hou, O God, hast tested us; thou hast tried us as silver is tried" (Ps. 66:10); "The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and the LORD tries hearts" (Prov. 17:3); "I will turn my hand against you and will smelt away your dross as with lye and remove all your alloy" (Isa. 1:25); "I have refined you. . . . I have tried you in the furnace of affliction" (Isa. 48:10); "I will refine them and test them" (Jer. 9:7); "I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested"

(Zech. 13:9); “[H]e is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi, and refine them like gold and silver” (Mal. 3:2-3); “[Y]our faith, more precious than gold which though perishable is tested by fire” (1 Pet. 1:6-7).

God’s cleansing or washing us is another common biblical theme: “Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! . . . Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean” (Ps. 51:2, 7); “Blows that wound cleanse away evil; strokes make clean the innermost parts” (Prov. 20:30); “[T]he Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning” (Isa. 4:4); “I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me” (Jer. 33:8); “I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses” (Ezek. 36:25); “our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb 10:22); “[H]e was cleansed from his old sins” (2 Pet. 1:9); “[T]he blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

Divine “chastisement” is taught clearly in many passages: “[A]s a man disciplines his son, the LORD your God disciplines you” (Deut. 8:5); “[D]o not despise the LORD discipline or be weary of his reproof,” (Prov. 3:11); “For thou didst test them as a father does in warning” (Wisd. 11:10); “God who tests our hearts” (1 Thess. 2:4); “For the Lord disciplines him whom he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives. It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? . . . [H]e disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness” (Heb. 12:6-7, 10).

We are subject to God’s indignation or wrath, insofar as we sin: “God will bring every deed into judgment” (Eccles. 12:14); “I will bear the indignation of the Lord because I have sinned against him. . . . He will bring me forth to the light” (Mic. 7:9).

Purgatory is “written all over” the passages above. I once didn’t make the connection of what seems so obvious to me now. I think there are many who (like me) might be persuaded to see that the Bible is far more “Catholic” than they had ever imagined.

Mystery Is No Basis for Rejecting Transubstantiation

The first Christian leader of any historical importance to deny the Real Presence in the Eucharist was Huldrych Zwingli (1484-1531), the Swiss Protestant leader. Zwingli wrote:

And how can we say that it is flesh when we do not perceive it to be such? If the body were there miraculously, the bread would not be bread, but we should perceive it to be flesh. Since, however, we see and perceive bread, it is evident that we are ascribing to God a miracle which he himself neither wills nor approves: for he does not work miracles which cannot be perceived.⁷

The Eucharist was intended by God as a different kind of miracle from the outset, requiring more profound faith, as opposed to the “proof” of tangible, empirical miracles. In this it is certainly not unique among Christian doctrines and traditional beliefs — many fully shared by our Protestant brethren. The virgin birth, for example, cannot be observed or proven and is the utter opposite of a *demonstrable* miracle.

Likewise, in the atonement of Jesus the world sees a beaten and tortured man being put to death on a cross. The Christian, on the other hand, sees there the great miracle of redemption and the means of the salvation of mankind — an unspeakably sublime miracle; yet who but those with the eyes of faith can see or believe it?

Baptism, according to most Christians, imparts real, regenerative grace. But this is rarely evident or tangible, especially in infants. Lastly, the Incarnation itself was not able to be perceived as an outward miracle, although it might be considered the most incredible miracle ever. It was not visible or manifest in the outward, concrete way to which Zwingli seems foolishly to think God would or must restrict Himself.

Jesus looked, felt, and sounded like a man; no one but those possessing faith would know (from simply observing Him) that He was also God, an uncreated Person who had made everything in the world on which He stood. No blood test could reveal that.

Jesus stated more than once that seeking outward signs betrays a lack of faith and proper vision: “An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign” (Matt. 12:29); “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe” (John 20:29). Signs and miracles (that is, in the empirical, sensory way that Zwingli demands for the Eucharist) do not suffice for many hardhearted people in the first place: “If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if some one should rise from the dead” (Luke 16:31).

Does it make sense that Jesus could walk through walls (with a body!) after His Resurrection (John 20:26), but God couldn’t or wouldn’t have performed the miracle of transubstantiation (literally, “change of substance”)? No one should rashly attempt to tie God’s hands by such arguments of alleged implausibility. The fact remains that God clearly can perform any miracle, however “strange.”

Many Christian beliefs seem unreasonable at first and difficult to grasp with the natural mind and require a great deal of faith. Protestants believe in a number of such doctrines, such as the Trinity, God’s eternal existence, omnipotence, the power of prayer, and God’s providence. Why should the Real Presence be singled out for excessive skepticism and unchecked rationalism? I contend that it is due to a preconceived bias against sacramentalism, which in a nutshell is matter conveying grace.

This anti-eucharistic bias reminds me of the Jewish and Muslim belief that the Incarnation is unthinkable. They view the Incarnation in the same way as the majority of Protestants regard the Eucharist. For them God wouldn’t or couldn’t become a man. For evangelicals God wouldn’t, couldn’t, or shouldn’t become substantially, sacramentally present under the outward forms of bread and wine. The dynamic is the same.

If Christ could become Man, He can surely will to become physically present in what continues to appear as bread and wine, once consecrated. The second thing is no less “odd” or possible than the first. Eucharist and Incarnation flow from the same biblically demonstrable premise: God profoundly uses matter for spiritual and redemptive purposes.

I agree with Blessed John Henry Cardinal Newman:

People say that the doctrine of Transubstantiation is difficult to believe. . . . It is difficult, impossible to imagine, I grant — but how is it difficult to believe? . . . For myself, I cannot, indeed prove it, I cannot tell how it is; but I say, “Why should it not be? What’s to hinder it? What do I know

of substance or matter? Just as much as the greatest philosophers, and that is nothing at all.”⁸

⁷ Huldrych Zwingli, *On the Lord's Supper*, 1526, translated by G. W. Bromiley.

⁸ John Henry Newman, *Apologia pro vita Sua* (1864), 318, part 7: “General Answer to Mr. Kingsley.”

On the Nature of Idolatry

Idolatry is a conscious act by nature or definition. Catholics are accused of substituting bread and wine as idols for the living God. I think virtually no Catholic who knows anything at all about his Faith would be stupid enough consciously to worship what he believes is still just a piece of bread.

It may be regarded as *mistaken worship*, but it is still quite pious and nonidolatrour, just as we Catholics would say that Lutheran or Anglican worship is pious and well-intentioned but in fact lacks the Real Presence (due to ordination and apostolic succession issues). It's not idolatrous — only mistaken as to the metaphysics.

Where is the sin in worshipping Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior and Redeemer — God the Son? We think He is truly present in the consecrated elements. So did Luther. If we are idolaters, so is he. Luther was even known to bow in adoration. Lutherans, too, believe that Jesus Christ is truly, substantially present after the Consecration, so why are *they* not habitually accused of idolatry?

It is of the essence of idolatry to be from one's heart and soul and will. If one is replacing God with something else, that is an interior decision. It *has* to be; otherwise, the whole thing would be reduced to robotic actions of an agent with no free will. This sort of thing is presupposed also in the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus shows how all sins begin in our hearts: hatred is the seed of murder, lust the kernel of adultery, et cetera. All sin is like that (at least the sin for which we are responsible).

Idolatry is the worshipping of a false god. That does not happen at Mass, because it is understood by all that *Jesus*, not bread and wine, is being worshipped eucharistically. The very word *transubstantiation* proves this. As for its being a matter of the heart and soul: the Bible establishes that, I think:

Isaiah 66:3: like him who blesses an idol. These have chosen their own ways, and *their soul* delights in their abominations.

Ezekiel 14:4-5: Therefore speak to them, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Any man of the house of Israel who takes his idols *into his*

heart and sets the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and yet comes to the prophet, I the LORD will answer him myself because of the multitude of his idols, that *I may lay hold of the hearts* of the house of Israel, who are all estranged from me through their idols.

Ezekiel 20:16: because they rejected my ordinances and did not walk in my statutes, and profaned my sabbaths; for *their heart* went after their idols. (cf. Ezek. 36:25; Sir. 46:11)

Another biblical motif is God's disgust over men "serving" idols (which is from the heart and the will: 2 Kings 17:12; 2 Kings 21:21; 2 Chron. 24:18; Ps. 106:36; Ezek. 20:39; 1 Thess. 1:9). St. Paul locates idolatry firmly in the interior disposition:

Romans 1:21, 24-25: [F]or although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless *minds* were darkened. . . . Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their *hearts* to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the *creature* rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever! Amen.

The word for "minds" in Romans 1:21 is *kardia* ("heart": the basis of "cardiac"), and is often rendered "heart" or "hearts" in other translations. The same word appears in Romans 1:24, where it is rendered "hearts" in the RSV. In the KJV it is translated "heart" all 158 times that it appears (according to *Young's Concordance*).

The *Catholic Encyclopedia*'s entry for "Idolatry" backs me up also:

The guilt of idolatry, however, is not to be estimated by its abstract nature alone; the concrete form it assumes in the *conscience* of the sinner is the *all-important element*.⁹

Idolatry is an internal disposition — the conscious worshipping of something other than God and replacing God with a creature or inanimate object.

⁹ J. Wilhelm, "Idolatry," *Catholic Encyclopedia*, (New York: Robert Appleton, 1913), <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07636a.htm>.

“The Apostle Paul Says He Is a Priest? Where?”

Some Protestants claim that priests are never mentioned in the Bible. Well, in Romans 15:16, Paul says he is a priest. And is this in Catholic versions only? Nope. The following six non-Catholic translations have St. Paul calling himself a “priest” (the Greek word is *hierourgeo* [Strong’s word no. 2418]):

Moffatt: as a priest of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the service of God’s gospel. My aim is to make the Gentiles an acceptable offering, consecrated by the holy Spirit.

20th Century New Testament: that I should be a minister of Christ Jesus to go to the Gentiles — that I should act as a priest of God’s Good News, so that the offering up of the Gentiles may be an acceptable sacrifice, consecrated by the Holy Spirit.

Young’s Literal Translation: for my being a servant of Jesus Christ to the nations, acting as priest in the good news of God, that the offering up of the nations may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

NASB: . . . ministering as a priest the gospel of God.

Weymouth: that I should be a minister of Christ Jesus among the Gentiles, doing priestly duties in connexion with God’s Good News so that the sacrifice — namely the Gentiles — may be acceptable to Him, being (as it is) an offering which the Holy Spirit has made holy.

RSV: to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

The NASB is the most interesting because it has a strong evangelical bias, and it *still* uses “priest” because that is clearly what this word means.

Goodspeed also has “priest” and Rotherham Emphasized has “priestly.” The NRSV has “priestly service.” It looks as if others would likely follow this pattern as well but I didn’t look them all up. These eight (not a one, Catholic) are sufficient to establish my point.

The corresponding evidence from lexicons and other similar aids about

hierourgeo is very strong, too: Kittel (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*) says of it: “This term means ‘to perform sacred or sacrificial ministry.’ In Josephus and Philo it always means ‘to offer sacrifice.’ ” Baptist A. T. Robertson tries to spin it in a Protestant direction but also says, “It means to work in sacred things, to minister as a priest.” Marvin Vincent (*Word Studies in the New Testament*) says, “Lit., ministering ‘as a priest’.” Thayer says: “used esp. of persons sacrificing . . . ‘to minister in the manner of a priest, minister in priestly service.’ ”

If anyone tries to claim that priests are never mentioned in the New Testament, this is the passage they need to grapple with.

Sacramentalism

God became man. The Incarnation was the event in salvation history that raised matter to previously unknown heights. All created matter was “good” from the start (Gen. 1:25), but was “glorified” by the Incarnation.

Ritual and “physicality” were not abolished by the coming of Christ. Quite the contrary: it was the Incarnation that fully established sacramentalism as a principle in the Christian religion. Sacramentalism may be defined as the belief that matter can convey grace. God uses matter both to help us live better lives (sanctification) and ultimately to save us (regeneration and justification), starting with baptism.

The atonement or redemption by Christ (His death on the Cross for us) was not purely spiritual. It was also as physical (sacramental, if you will) as it could be. Protestants often piously refer to the Blood of Jesus, and rightly so (see, e.g., Rev. 5:9; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; Heb. 9:12; 1 Pet. 1:2; 1 John 1:7). This is explicitly sacramental thinking.

It was the very suffering of Jesus in the flesh, and the voluntary shedding of His blood, that constituted the crucial, essential aspect of His work as our Redeemer and Savior. One can’t avoid this: “he was bruised for our iniquities” (Isa. 53:5).

So it is curious that many Protestants appear to possess a pronounced hostility to the sacramental belief of the Real Presence in the Eucharist, seeing that it flows so straightforwardly from the Incarnation and the Crucifixion itself. The New Testament is filled with incarnational and sacramental indications — instances of matter conveying grace. The Church is the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 1:22-23; 5:30), and marriage (including its physical aspects) is described as a direct parallel to Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:22-33, esp. 29-32). Jesus even equates Himself in some sense with the Church, saying He was “persecuted” by Paul after the Resurrection (Acts 9:5).

Not only that, but in St. Paul’s teaching, one can find a repeated theme of identifying very graphically and literally with Christ and His sufferings (see 2

Cor. 4:10; Phil. 2:17; 3:10; 2 Tim. 4:6; and above all, Col. 1:24).

Matter conveys grace all over the place in Scripture: baptism confers regeneration (Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21; cf. Mark 16:16; Rom. 6:3-4; 1 Cor. 6:11; Titus 3:5). Paul's "handkerchiefs" healed the sick (Acts 19:12), as did Peter's shadow (Acts 5:15), Jesus' garment (Matt. 9:20-22) and His saliva mixed with dirt (John 9:5ff.; Mark 8:22-25), and water from the pool of Siloam (John 9:7).

Anointing with oil for healing is encouraged (James 5:14). We also observe in Scripture the laying on of hands for the purpose of ordination and commissioning (Acts 6:6; 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6) to facilitate the initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17-19; 13:3; 19:6), and for healing (Mark 6:5; Luke 13:13; Acts 9:17-18).

Even under the old covenant, a dead man was raised simply by coming in contact with the bones of the prophet Elisha (2 Kings 13:21), which is also one of the direct evidences for the Catholic practice of the veneration of relics (itself an extension of the sacramental principle).

Sacramentalism is a "product" of the Incarnation, as the Church is. But we must also understand that the sacraments are not "magic charms." The Church also teaches that one should have the correct interior disposition when receiving them. The great catechist Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J., wrote, in an entry on "Sacramental Dispositions":

Condition of soul required for the valid and / or fruitful reception of the sacraments. . . . In the recipient who has the use of reason is required merely that no obstacles be placed in the way. Such obstacles are a lack of faith or sanctifying grace or of a right intention.¹⁰

Likewise, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, in its section on *ex opere operato* (no. 1128), notes: "Nevertheless, the fruits of the sacraments also depend on the disposition of the one who receives them."

The sacrament of the Eucharist, for example, will not have a positive effect or convey grace if received by a person in mortal sin (see 1 Cor. 11:27-30; CCC 1415), and priestly absolution is null and void without the necessary prerequisite of true repentance.

This is all the more true of sacramentals (such as holy water, scapulars, blessings, the Miraculous Medal, genuflection, et cetera), which depend entirely on the inner state of the one using or receiving them. Intent, sincerity,

motivation, piety, and suchlike are all supremely important in the Catholic life. A person who wears a scapular but neglects the pursuit of righteousness and obedience and views the scapular as a magic charm (which is occultic superstition) will not receive the benefits of the sacramental. A piece of cloth cannot rescind the normal duties of the Catholic life. Nor is God some sort of celestial vending machine. He wants our *hearts*; he wants *us* — not meaningless outward obedience without the proper interior motivation, in love, and by His grace. Sacraments help us, but we must do our part, too.

¹⁰ *Modern Catholic Dictionary* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1980), 477.

Ritualistic and Formal Worship

All Christians are tempted at times merely to go through the motions of Christianity, lacking passion and commitment and wholehearted devotion. This charge seems often to be directed at Catholics in terms of how we worship. It's said that the Mass is too "ritualistic" and that this leads to rote observance without wholehearted participation.

Does the Bible teach that formal worship is inevitably or even usually "cold" and "dead" (as critics would have it)? If formal worship or religious ritual were always and intrinsically opposed to sincere, heartfelt adoration and praise of God, then certainly God wouldn't have commanded it in the Bible. Yet we find that He does exactly that, in many places.

It is abundantly clear in the Old Testament. Elaborate, painstaking instructions for the ark of the covenant (Exod. 25:1-22), the tabernacle (Exod. 25:23-40; 26-27), and the Temple (1 Kings 6-7) illustrate the highly ritualistic nature of Hebrew worship (see also Lev. 23:37-38; 24:5-8).

Formal and ritualistic ceremonies and worship services are recorded as taking place even in heaven itself:

Revelation 4:8-11: And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all round and within, and day and night they never cease to sing, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives for ever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever; they cast their crowns before the throne, singing, "Worthy art thou, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for thou didst create all things, and by thy will they existed and were created."

Revelation 5:6-14: And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth; and he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. And when he had

taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and with golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints; and they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy art thou to take the scroll and to open its seals, for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom men for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and hast made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on earth.” Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all therein, saying, “To him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might for ever and ever!” And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

With “thousands of thousands” and “every creature in heaven and on earth” all uttering the same praise or prayer (or liturgy, if you will) at the same time, it’s obvious that these are form prayers and formal worship: distinguishable from (sincere) spontaneous praise and worship (with its *praise the Lords* and *Hallelujahs* and *Glory to Gods*).

Note that these examples include repetitious prayer (Rev. 4:8: “they never cease to sing”), repeated chants or hymns (Rev. 4:11; 5:9-10), and sacrifice (Rev. 5:6). Revelation 8:3-4 also mentions an altar and incense. It seems quite clear, then, that the Bible is not opposed to ritual or to formality (in either worship or prayer) at all. What God *does* oppose is *hypocritical* worship, lacking the proper attitude of heart toward God. This is an ongoing human tendency that we all must be vigilant (by His grace) to avoid:

Amos 5:12, 21-22: For I know how many are your transgressions, and how great are your sins. . . . I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and cereal offerings, I will not accept them. (cf. Prov. 15:8; Jer. 6:19-20)

Matthew 5:23-24: So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then

come and offer your gift.

Matthew 6:1-2: Beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen by them; for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Thus, when you give alms, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by men. (cf. Matt. 6:3-6, 16; 23:23-28)

Matthew 15:7-9: You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.”

What God opposes is deceit and spiritual hypocrisy, and worship (whether formal or informal) devoid of a committed, heartfelt spirit and devotion, or in conjunction with continued sin and disobedience.

Is the Rosary “Vain Repetition”?

A new Catholic convert who was struggling with some things in the Faith asked me about the Rosary some years ago: “Mary is most often mentioned in the Rosary. I find it difficult meditating on Christ when Mary is so prevalent. Why is Mary so heavily infused into the prayer?”

Here is my reply:

One must understand the nature of the Rosary and the purpose of the repetition. Most of the words of the Hail Mary are, it should be noted, straight from the Bible. And it’s incorrect to say that because *Mary* might be the word repeated more than any other in the Rosary, that therefore she is considered more important than Jesus or is the focus of the Rosary meditation. The intent of the repetitions of the Hail Mary is to form a sort of background music, so to speak, to the meditations on (mostly) the life of Jesus.

It reminds me of an analogy from my days as a trombone player in my high school band and orchestra. At graduations every year, we had to play the famous *Pomp and Circumstance*, by Edward Elgar. Now, was the purpose of the commencement ceremony to hear *Pomp and Circumstance* seventy-one times? No, of course not. It was to honor the graduates for their accomplishment in achieving a high school diploma. The music was the *background*, just as a soundtrack to a movie is.

It’s not a perfect analogy (few are), but the Hail Marys in the Rosary are, at least in part, a sort of rhythmic background to the meditations. The repetition offers a way (rather ingenious, when fully understood) to move forward in the prayer and to avoid distraction (something we are all very familiar with when we try to pray).

You say it is difficult to meditate on Christ while repeating the Hail Mary. This is, I would venture to guess, probably mostly a function of the unfamiliarity with the Rosary. It’s very different from much of Protestant piety, just as things such as penance and purgatory and prayers for the dead or asking saints to pray for us are quite foreign at first to the typical Protestant mind. It’s a “learned art,” to a large extent. Your experience is

common to many converts.

We find in the Bible a similar sort of repetitious, chantlike form. Take, for example, Psalm 136, in which the same phrase: “for his steadfast love endures forever” is repeated for twenty-six straight verses! The Hail Marys in the Rosary are somewhat like that. But they are not “vain repetitions” (Matt. 6:7, KJV; cf. “heap up empty phrases,” RSV; also Sir. 7:14: “Do not . . . repeat yourself in your prayer”).

Protestants who argue that all formal prayers that repeat phrases are “empty” or “vain” overlook the entire deeper meaning and import of this biblical narrative in context. Jesus is recommending and exhorting His hearers to a *genuine, humble piety of the heart*, as opposed to an empty, shell-like, merely external piety, intended to be seen by others in a spiritually prideful sense.

This theme of authentic versus sham piety is prevalent in the Sermon on the Mount (see Matt. 6:1-6, 16; cf. Matt. 7:20-23; 15:9). The same general idea is also observed in Mark (12:38-40) and Luke (20:46-47). It’s not that all long prayers are condemned, any more than repetitious prayers are, but that prayers made with a pretentious, prideful spirit (showing off in front of others; trying to make people think one is “superpious”) are condemned.

Lastly, in Matthew 6:7, Jesus qualifies what He is opposing in prayer, with, “as the Gentiles do.” He’s not talking about the Hebrew tradition of prayer (which quite obviously included much repetition, such as in the psalms and priestly chants and prayers). He’s not even talking about (His frequent target) the Pharisees, but rather the “pagan” or “heathen” (according to various translations) Romans and Greeks: people who followed a different and ultimately false religion. That element and the aspect of interior piety indicate that the passage is far more than merely a discussion of repetition: let alone *all* repetition, as if God is condemning *that*.

Jesus Himself used repetition in prayer. For example: “he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words” (Matt. 26:44; cf. Mark 14:39). Moreover, we know that worship in heaven is *extremely* repetitious:

Revelation 4:8: [D]ay and night they never cease to sing, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!”

We should recall all these things the next time we hear repetitious or indeed any *formal* prayer condemned as “vain repetition” or supposedly

impious by nature. Citing one scriptural passage out of context without considering related biblical data is always dangerous.

Asking Saints to Intercede Is a Teaching of Jesus

Have you ever talked to anyone who said: “The Bible never shows anyone praying to anyone other than God! And we can never communicate to anyone who is dead, either. That’s occultic!”

Yet it’s indisputable that Jesus indeed plainly teaches the very thing that they claim is nonexistent in Scripture. In His story of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19-31), we find our compelling prooftext:

Luke 16:24: And he called out, “Father Abraham, have mercy upon me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame.”

This is the Abraham of the Bible — long dead by that time — being asked to do something by a “rich man” (Luke 16:19, 22), traditionally known as Dives (a Latin word for “rich man”). Abraham’s answer was, in effect, no (Luke 16:25-26). Having failed in that request, Dives prays to him again for something else:

Luke 16:27-28: And he said, “Then I beg you, father [KJV: “I pray thee therefore, father”], to send him to my father’s house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.”

His request is again declined. He argues with Abraham, but Abraham reiterates that what he asks is futile (Luke 16:29-31). All of this reveals to us that not only can dead saints hear our requests; they also have some measure of power to *carry them out on their own* (although no doubt by God’s power). Abraham is asked to “send” a dead man to appear to the rich man’s brothers, so that they might avoid damnation.

Abraham doesn’t deny that he is *able* to send Lazarus to do such a thing; he only denies that it would *work* (by the logic of “if they don’t respond to greater factor x, they will not respond to lesser factor y”). Therefore, it is assumed in the story that Abraham had the ability and authority to do so on his own. And this is all taught, remember, by our Lord Jesus.

The fact that Dives is dead (in the story they are both in *Hades* or *Sheol*:

the intermediate netherworld) is irrelevant to the argument at hand, since standard Protestant theology holds that no one should make such a request to anyone but God. Dives asks Abraham to send Lazarus to him, and then to his brothers, so that they can avoid his fate.

That is very much a prayer: asking for supernatural aid from those who have left the earthly life and attained a greater perfection. Also, rather strikingly (and disturbingly for Protestant theology), God is never mentioned in the entire story of Lazarus and the rich man. It's all about Dives asking or praying to Abraham for two requests.

Protestant theology also generally teaches that we can't talk to anyone who is dead, let alone make intercessory requests to them. Yet King Saul talked to the dead prophet Samuel (1 Sam. 28:12-15), Moses and Elijah appeared at the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-3), the "two witnesses" of Revelation (11:3-13) came back to life again (and talked to folks); so did those who rose after Jesus' Resurrection (Matt. 27:50-53).

One reply is to maintain that "this is only a *parable*"; therefore we are told that it doesn't "prove" anything. But many Bible commentators agree that it's *not* a parable. Parables don't use proper names: let alone that of a familiar historical figure such as Abraham. Parables are also prefaced by a statement (usually by the Bible writer, not Jesus) that the words following are to be considered a parable. Nor do I recall any other parables referring to Hades. They are in almost all instances quite "earthy" illustrations: often using agricultural and master and servant word pictures.

But even if we grant for the sake of argument that it *is* a parable, the difficulties for Protestants are not overcome at all, since even parables cannot contain things that are theologically false, lest Jesus be guilty of leading people into heresy by means of untrue illustrations or analogies.

In fact, my contention would be even *stronger* if it is a parable, for in a nonparable, a person could do or say something theologically incorrect. But in a parable taught by Jesus, who is God and is omniscient, in an inspired, infallible revelation, falsehood could not be "enshrined." What Jesus is teaching His hearers cannot contain theological error, and arguments by analogy (basically what parables are) cannot contain false principles.

We conclude, then, that Jesus sanctioned praying to dead men for requests. That is the traditional notion of the Communion of Saints.

Praying to Angels and Angelic Intercession

Non-Catholic Christians believe that we can pray to no one but God and ask no one to fulfill an intercessory prayer request but God. But what does the Bible teach?

In the Old Testament, Lot makes such a request of two angels, who were sent by God to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:13):

Genesis 19:20: “Behold, yonder city is near enough to flee to, and it is a little one. Let me escape there . . . and my life will be saved!”

One of them grants his “prayer”: “Behold, I grant you this favor also, that I will not overthrow the city of which you have spoken” (Gen. 19:21). Someone might say, “But the angel wasn’t in heaven.” Location makes no difference: the angel still fulfilled an intercessory request.

Angels can talk to us from heaven. For example: “[T]he angel of God called to Hagar from heaven” (Gen. 21:17). And we know that angels pray to God for us; such as the “angel of the Lord” praying to God for the inhabitants of Jerusalem and other cities of Judah (Zech. 1:12), and the angel offering to God at the altar in heaven the “prayers of the saints” (Rev. 8:3-4).

When Jacob wrestled with the angel (Gen. 32:24-29), he asked the angel to bless him, and the angel did so (Gen. 32:28-29). Moreover, when Jacob (Israel) blessed his sons Joseph and Manasseh, he asked not only God to bless them, but also an angel (“the angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads”: Gen. 48:16).

One common response to arguments like this is to note that the “angel of the Lord” is actually God Himself, or Jesus in a sort of pre-incarnate manifestation or “theophany”: as suggested by many passages (Gen. 22:10-18; 31:11-13; Exod. 3:2-6, 14-16 [Moses and the burning bush]; 13:21; cf. 14:19; Judges 2:1; 6:12-14; Josh. 5:14-15; Zech. 12:8; Acts 8:26, 29). This is a quite respectable harmonization of the scriptural data: held, in fact, by many Eastern Church Fathers.

Yet in other passages “the angel of the Lord” is distinguished from God (Zech. 1:12 and the following):

2 Samuel 24:16: And when the angel stretched forth his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD repented of the evil, and said to the angel who was working destruction among the people, “It is enough; now stay your hand.” And the angel of the LORD was by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

This ambiguity (seeming equation with God in many places, and distinction from Him in others) is explained by St. Augustine, as cited in the 1911 *Catholic Encyclopedia* article on “Angels”:

St. Augustine (*Sermo vii, de Scripturis, PG V*) when treating of the burning bush (Exodus 3) . . . points out: “Elsewhere in the Bible when a prophet speaks it is yet said to be the Lord who speaks, not of course because the prophet is the Lord but because the Lord is in the prophet; and so in the same way when the Lord condescends to speak through the mouth of a prophet or an angel, it is the same as when he speaks by a prophet or apostle, and the angel is correctly termed an angel if we consider him himself, but equally correctly is he termed ‘the Lord’ because God dwells in him. . . . It is the name of the indweller, not of the temple.”

Scripture also clarifies how the angel of the Lord is a unique representative of God:

Exodus 23:20-22: “Behold, *I send an angel* before you, to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place which I have prepared. Give heed to him and hearken to his voice, do not rebel against him, for *he will not pardon your transgression; for my name is in him*. But if you hearken attentively to his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. When *my angel* goes before you.” (cf. Exod. 33:14)

The angel being delegated to pardon transgressions is an interesting precursor to priestly absolution and “binding and loosing.”

Therefore, given these Scripture passages and analysis we may also, I submit, plausibly interpret the “angel of the Lord” as a created angel who nevertheless profoundly “carries” God’s name and presence.

Such intermediaries between men and God should not surprise us, since even the Law was mediated to men by angels: “delivered” by them (Acts 7:53), “ordained by angels through an intermediary” (Gal. 3:19), and

“declared by angels” (Heb. 2:2). Angels even help distribute His grace (Rev. 1:4). Thus, as we have already seen in the Bible: angels can be prayed to and answer prayers, as an additional mediatorial angelic function.

Worshipping God through Images in Scripture

Exodus 33:9-11: When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the door of the tent, and the LORD would speak with Moses. And when all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the door of the tent, all the people would rise up and worship, every man at his tent door. Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.

2 Chronicles 7:1-4: When Solomon had ended his prayer, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. And the priests could not enter the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD filled the LORD's house. When all the children of Israel saw the fire come down and the glory of the LORD upon the temple, they bowed down with their faces to the earth on the pavement, and worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying, "For he is good, for his steadfast love endures for ever." Then the king and all the people offered sacrifice before the LORD.

According to Reformed Protestant iconoclastic thinking, these people were worshipping a cloud and fire. I say they were worshipping God *through* those images. If not, then the Bible wouldn't have presented these things positively. They would have been condemned as idolatry. But they were not.

Idolatry (biblically defined) is a matter of the heart. It isn't just a matter of plaster and wood. Idolatry entails substituting any created thing for God Himself. Using something as a visual or devotional aid is not *necessarily* or always doing that. One is worshipping God by means of the visual aid.

In order for praying before a crucifix, for example, to be idolatry (as some Protestants hold) the person praying would have to believe that the image on the crucifix is (1) actually God, or a god and (2) meant to replace the one true God as a substitute (an idol). I submit that virtually no Christian in the history of the world who knows *anything* about the Faith has ever done such a silly thing. They're obviously worshipping Jesus (God) by means of the visual aid.

I can see how a Protestant would object to a statue of Mary or another saint, because they falsely think veneration is worship, and worship belongs

only to God. But I can't understand (even under Protestant premises) the objection to a statue of Jesus or a crucifix: not since the Incarnation, in which Jesus became the "image [Greek, *eikon*] of the invisible God."

Protestants have no objection, oddly enough, to statues of Luther in front of seminaries, or huge statues of John Calvin and three other guys in Geneva on the "Reformation Wall."

The Ten Commandments don't forbid all images, but only "graven images," which were specifically intended to be gods to be worshipped. God had represented Himself visually in all kinds of ways: the burning bush, the pillar of cloud, theophanies, the angel of the Lord, and finally Jesus Himself, who *is* God, and quite visual.

Martin Luther and the Intercession of the Saints

In the introduction to Martin Luther's commentary on the Magnificat,^{[11](#)} translator Albert T. W. Steinhäuser wrote:

Although Luther regards her [Mary] in one place as sinless, and invokes her aid and intercession at the beginning and close of his work, these are isolated instances; the whole tenor of the exposition is evangelical, and as far removed from the Mariolatry of Rome as from an ultra-protestant depreciation of the Mother of our Lord. (p. 120)

The Blessed Virgin Mary is described by Luther as sinless (my italics):

Mary also freely ascribes all to God's grace, not to her merit. For *though she was without sin*, yet that grace was too surpassing great for her to deserve it in any way. How should a creature deserve to become the Mother of God! (p. 161)

In the introduction three places are noted where Luther asked for or mentioned Mary's invocation or intercession (my italics again):

May the tender Mother of God herself *procure for me* the spirit of wisdom, profitably and thoroughly to expound this song of hers, so that your Grace as well as we all may draw therefrom wholesome knowledge and a praiseworthy life, and thus come to chant and sing this Magnificat eternally in heaven. (p. 125)

That is why I said Mary does not desire to be an idol; she does nothing, God does all. *We ought to call upon her, that for her sake God may grant and do what we request. Thus also all other saints are to be invoked*, so that the work may be every way God's alone. (p. 164)

Very Catholic! Luther understands biblical paradox: God does all; at the same time (without contradiction) He uses us to do it.

We pray God to give us a right understanding of this Magnificat, an understanding that consists not merely in brilliant words, but in glowing life in body and soul. *May Christ grant us this through the intercession and for the sake of His dear Mother Mary. Amen.* (p. 198)

Therefore, Luther at this time believed in the invocation and intercession of the saints, including Mary. This writing (so says Steinhaeuser) was completed by June 10, 1521, and published in late August or early September 1521.

Later, Luther changed his view on those things, but he still believed them as late as *after* the famous Diet of Worms (“Here I stand!”), which ran from January 28 to May 25, 1521.

¹¹ Martin Luther, *Works of Martin Luther*, trans. Albert T. W. Steinhaeuser, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1982), 123-200.

The False Doctrine of “Soul Sleep”

Matthew 27:52, 1 Corinthians 15:20, and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-15 are instances of what is called “phenomenological” language: the language of outward description or appearance rather than complete metaphysical analysis. To us the dead appear to be “asleep.”

Jesus Himself used this sort of language, when He described the daughter of Jairus, who had died: “Do not weep, for she is not dead, but sleeping” (Luke 8:52). Then He said, “Child arise” “and her spirit returned” (Luke 8:54-55), thus proving that it was *separate* from her body. Consciousness after death is clearly taught in Scripture:

Matthew 10:28: And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Revelation 6:9-10: When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne; they cried out with a loud voice, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before thou wilt judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth?”

1 Kings 17:21-22: Then he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried to the LORD, “O LORD my God, let this child’s soul come into him again.” And the LORD hearkened to the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. (cf. Luke 8:53-55)

In the above passages, the soul is described as a separate entity from the body.

Psalms 116:15: Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.

The consciousness of the dead is assumed here, or else this verse becomes ludicrous.

Jehovah’s Witnesses, Seventh-Day Adventists, and other sects that teach what is known as *annihilationism* or *soul-sleep* (no consciousness after death and no hell, with the sinner being annihilated out of existence altogether), typically rely on the distortion of a few passages in order to “prove” their

error:

Ecclesiastes 9:5: [T]he dead know nothing, and they have no more reward.

If the first clause is understood in an absolute sense, then so must the second clause be interpreted. Thus, the dead would have no “reward” as well as no consciousness. This would deny the resurrection and the rewarding of the righteous (see Rev. 20:11-13; 21:6-7; 22:12, 14). Obviously, then, a qualification of some sort has to be placed on Ecclesiastes 9:5.

In the very next verse, we learn that “they have no more for ever any share in all that is done under the sun.” In other words, in relation to *this* world, the dead know nothing, but they are in a *different realm*, where they *do* know something. As further examples of this limited sense of “not knowing anything” in Scripture, see 1 Samuel 20:39 and 2 Samuel 15:11, where an interpretation of unconsciousness would be ridiculous.

Ezekiel 18:4: Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sins shall die. (cf. Ezek. 18:20)

Here, the *spiritual* use of *death* in the Bible is overlooked. For instance, 1 Timothy 5:6 reads: “[S]he who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives” (cf. Eph. 2:1 and Luke 15:24). That Ezekiel 18:4, 20 refer to *spiritual death* (i.e., *separation* from God, not annihilation) is obvious from context, since Ezekiel 18:21 declares:

But if a wicked man turns away from all his sins which he has committed and keeps all my statutes and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die.

Since all men die physically, this must be talking about the spiritual, or “second” death. So much for this “proof” of soul sleep or annihilationism.

Psalms 146:4: When his breath departs he returns to his earth; on that very day his plans perish.

This verse’s meaning is similar to that of Ecclesiastes 9:5. Here, “plans” [“thoughts” in KJV] refer to unaccomplished purposes of a person on earth. Death puts an end to *those* purposes, as anyone would agree. In this sense, one’s thoughts or plans “perish” at death. Another similar use occurs at Isaiah 55:7: “[L]et the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts.” It doesn’t mean that unrighteous men must cease all thinking and become unconscious and nonexistent. Nor does Psalm 146:4.

Much of this sort of inadequate and erroneous exegesis results from a profound lack of understanding of the many literary forms and devices used in Scripture, as seen in these three examples. Much of the Old Testament is poetry of one sort or another. One cannot interpret poetry in a wooden, literal way.

Veneration of Saints

Romans 15:18: For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has wrought through me to win obedience from the Gentiles, by word and deed.

1 Corinthians 3:5: What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each.

2 Corinthians 2:14: But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumph, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere.

2 Corinthians 5:20: So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

2 Corinthians 11:10: As the truth of Christ is in me, this boast of mine shall not be silenced in the regions of Achaia.

2 Corinthians 13:3: Christ is speaking in me.

Galatians 2:8: [F]or he who worked through Peter for the mission to the circumcised worked through me also for the Gentiles.

Galatians 2:20: I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Philippians 1:26: so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.

Philippians 4:9: What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace will be with you.

1 Timothy 1:16: [B]ut I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience for an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.

Titus 1:3: and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by command of God our Savior.

If St. Paul is saying that all of these things “in” or “through” him were because of Christ and that others see these things “in” or “through” him, does it not follow that Paul could be venerated, precisely because of what was “in” or “through” him and was observed by others, to their edification? The Catholic doctrine of veneration, after all, means honoring a creature because he profoundly reflects the grace and love and other attributes of God.

Although this is merely a deductive proof to some extent, I think it works on some level, especially because elsewhere, many times, Paul urges his followers to “imitate” him, as he in turn imitated Jesus Christ.

The Perpetual Virginity of Mary

Once upon a time, virtually no Christians — including Protestants — denied that Mary the Mother of Jesus was perpetually a virgin. Of the early leaders of the Protestant movement, including Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Bullinger, and Cranmer, virtually all fully accepted this doctrine. Moreover, most Protestant exegetes *continued* to believe it for at least another 350 years or so.

But today (for various reasons) things are very different, so it's helpful to revisit the biblical arguments, since the Bible is the authority all Christians revere. A surprising number can be found:

1. Luke 2:41-51 describes Mary and Joseph taking Jesus to the Temple at the age of twelve, for the required observance of Passover. Everyone agrees that He was the first child of Mary, so if there were up to five or more siblings, as some maintain (or even one), why is there no hint of them at all in this account?
2. Neither Hebrew nor Aramaic has a word for *cousin*. The New Testament was written in Greek, which does have such a word (*sun-genis*), but Jesus and His disciples spoke Aramaic (a late version of Hebrew), and the Hebrew word *ach* is literally translated as *adelphos*, the literal equivalent of the English *brother*. In the Bible, it has a very wide range of meanings beyond “sibling,” just as *brother* does in English. Thus, it is routinely used in the New Testament to describe cousins or kinsmen, et cetera.
3. Jesus Himself uses *brethren* (*adelphos*) in a nonsibling sense. In Matthew 23:8 (cf. Matt. 12:49-50), He calls, for example, the “crowds” and His “disciples” (23:1) “brethren.” In other words, they are *each other's* “brothers”: the brotherhood of Christians.
4. In comparing Matthew 27:56, Mark 15:40, and John 19:25, we find that James and Joseph (mentioned in Matthew 13:55 with Simon and Jude as Jesus' “brothers”) are the sons of Mary, the wife of Clopas. This other Mary (Matt. 27:61; 28:1) is called our Lady's *adelphie* in John 19:25. Assuming that there are not two women named Mary in one family, this usage apparently refers to a cousin or a more distant relative. Matthew 13:55-56 and

Mark 6:3 mention Simon, Jude, and “sisters” along with James and Joseph, calling all *adelphoi*. The most plausible interpretation of all this related data is a use of *adelphos* as “cousins” (or possibly, stepbrothers) rather than “siblings.” We know for sure, from the above information, that James and Joseph were not Jesus’ siblings.

It’s not mere special pleading to argue in this fashion (as is charged), or an alleged desperation of Catholics who supposedly “read into” the texts their prior belief in the dogma of perpetual virginity. Plenty of Protestant exegesis and scholarship confirms these views: especially in older commentaries. For example, the prominent nineteenth-century *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, by Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, states, regarding Matthew 13:55 (my italics added):

An *exceedingly difficult question* here arises — What were these “brethren” and “sisters” to Jesus? Were they, First, His full brothers and sisters? or, Secondly, Were they His *step-brothers and step-sisters*, children of Joseph by a former marriage? or, Thirdly, Were they His *cousins, according to a common way of speaking among the Jews* respecting persons of collateral descent? On this subject an immense deal has been written, nor are opinions yet by any means agreed. . . . In addition to other objections, *many of the best interpreters . . . prefer the third opinion.* . . . Thus dubiously we prefer to leave this *vexed question, encompassed as it is with difficulties.*

5. The Blessed Virgin Mary is committed to the care of the apostle John by Jesus from the Cross (John 19:26-27). Jesus certainly wouldn’t have done this if He had brothers (all of whom would have been younger than He was).

6. Matthew 1:24-25 says, “Joseph . . . knew her not *until* she had borne a son.” This passage has been used as an argument that Mary did not remain a virgin after the birth of Jesus, but the same Protestant commentary also states (my italics again):

The word “till” [*until* above] does not necessarily imply that they lived on a different footing afterwards (as will be evident from the use of the same word in 1 Samuel 15:35; 2 Samuel 6:23; Matthew 12:20); nor does the word “first-born” decide the *much-disputed question*, whether Mary had any children to Joseph after the birth of Christ; for, as Lightfoot says, “The law, in speaking of the first-born, regarded not whether any were born *after* or no, but only that none were born before.”

John Calvin used the same counterargument in favor of Mary's perpetual virginity. In fact, in his *Harmony of the Gospels*, commenting on Matthew 1:25, he thought the contention of further siblings based on this passage was so unfounded that he wrote, "No man will obstinately keep up the argument, except from an extreme fondness for disputation."

In "Hebraic" use, the Greek *adelphos* applies to cousins, fellow countrymen, and a wide array of uses beyond the meaning of "sibling." Yet it is always translated as "brother" in the KJV (246 times). The cognate *adelphe* is translated twenty-four times only as "sister." This is because it reflects Hebrew usage, translated into Greek. Briefly put, in Jesus' Hebrew culture (and Middle Eastern culture even today), cousins were called "brothers."

Now, it's true that *sungenis* (Greek for "cousin") and its cognate *sungenia* appear in the New Testament fifteen times (*sungenia*: Luke 1:61; Acts 7:3, 14; *sungenis*: Mark 6:4; Luke 1:36, 58; 2:44; 14:12; 21:16; John 18:26; Acts 10:24; Rom. 9:3; 16:7, 11, 21). But in the KJV they are usually translated "kinsmen," "kinsfolk," or "kindred" — that is, in a sense wider than "cousin," often referring to the entire nation of Hebrews. Thus, the eminent Protestant linguist W. E. Vine, in his *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, lists *sungenis* not only under "Cousin" but also under "Kin, Kinsfolk, Kinsman, Kinswoman."

In all but two of these occurrences, the authors were either Luke or Paul. Luke was a Greek Gentile. Paul, although Jewish, was raised in the very cosmopolitan, culturally Greek town of Tarsus. But even so, both still clearly used *adelphos* many times with the meaning of nonsibling (Luke 10:29; Acts 3:17; 7:23-26; Rom. 1:7, 13; 9:3; 1 Thess. 1:4).

Strikingly, it looks as if *every* time St. Paul uses *adelphos* (unless I missed one or two), he means it as something other than blood brother or sibling. He uses the word or related cognates no fewer than 138 times in this way. Yet we often hear about Galatians 1:19: "James the Lord's brother." Despite the 137 other times that Paul uses *adelphos* to mean nonsibling, are we to believe that in this one case he *must* mean sibling? That doesn't make any sense.

Some folks think it is a compelling argument that *sungenis* isn't used to describe the brothers of Jesus. But they need to examine Mark 6:4, where *sungenis* appears:

And Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country, and among his own *kin*, and in his own house." (cf. John

7:5: “For even his brothers did not believe in him.”)

What is the context? Let’s look at the preceding verse, where the people in “his own country” (John 6:1) exclaimed:

“Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him.

It can plausibly be argued, then, that Jesus’ reference to *kin* (*sungenis*) refers (at least in part) back to this mention of His “brothers” and “sisters”: His relatives. Since we know that *sungenis* refers to cousins or more distant relatives, that would be an indication of the status of those called Jesus’ “brothers.”

Jude is called the Lord’s “brother” in Matthew 13:55 and Mark 6:3. If this is the same Jude who wrote the epistle bearing that name (as many think), he calls himself “a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James” (Jude 1:1). Now, suppose for a moment that he *was* Jesus’ blood brother. In that case, why would he refrain from referring to himself as the Lord’s own sibling (while we are told that such a phraseology occurs several times in the New Testament, referring to a sibling relationship) and choose instead to identify himself as *James’s* brother? Moreover, James also refrains from calling himself Jesus’ brother, in his epistle (James 1:1: “servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ”), even though St. Paul calls him “the Lord’s brother” (Gal. 1:19).

It’s true that Scripture doesn’t come right out and explicitly state that Mary was a perpetual virgin. But nothing in Scripture *contradicts* that notion, and (to say the same thing another way) nothing in the perpetual-virginity doctrine contradicts Scripture. Moreover, no Scripture can be produced that absolutely, undeniably, compellingly defeats the perpetual virginity of Mary.

The alleged disproofs utterly fail in their purpose. The attempted linguistic argument against Mary’s perpetual virginity from the mere use of the word *brothers* in English translations (and from *sungenis*) falls flat at every turn, as we have seen.

If there is any purely “human” tradition here, then, it is the *denial* of the perpetual virginity of Mary, since it originated (mostly) some seventeen hundred years after the initial apostolic deposit — just as all heresies are much later corruptions. The earliest Church Fathers know of no such thing.

To a person, they all testify that Mary was perpetually a virgin and, indeed, thought that this protected the doctrine of the Incarnation, as a miraculous birth from a mother who was a virgin before, during, and *after* the birth.

Mary's Consecrated Virginity

A priest who was helping a Baptist woman to understand the perpetual virginity of Mary became a bit frustrated, finally blurting out: “God Himself was in Mary’s womb!” In a moment of illumination or grace or inspiration, the woman understood, thinking: “Take off your shoes, for this is holy ground.” The many relevant biblical analogies took hold.

We observe in Holy Scripture, for instance, Uzziah, who died when he touched the ark of the covenant, which was arguably the holiest object in the Old Testament, even though he was only trying to prevent it from falling (2 Sam. 6:2-7). Others died by merely looking inside the ark (1 Sam. 6:19; cf. Exod. 33:20). When God was present in a special way on Mount Sinai, at the time Moses received the Ten Commandments (Exod. 19-20), the people were warned not even to touch the mountain or its border, lest they die (Exod. 19:12-13). This included even animals.

I submit that this has implications for the propriety (although not literal necessity) of Mary’s being immaculate, in order to carry God in her womb for nine months. Without going into unnecessary detail, it also follows analogically, and from pious reflection, I think, that Mary’s perpetual virginity is fitting and proper by the nature of the relationship of a holy God and man.

The Blessed Virgin Mary became, in effect, the New Holy of Holies, where God specially resides. But in the case of Mary, God is more present than He ever was in the tabernacle and the Temple, because now He is there *physically*, as a man, as well. Mary is the ark of the new covenant (as the Church Fathers called her) and the Mother of God (the Son).

Similarly, Jesus taught us that there is no marriage in heaven (Matt. 22:30; Mark 12:25; Luke 20:34-35). Marriage is a type of the relationship of God and man and our eventual union (Eph. 5:21-33). The closeness that we will have with each other and with God in heaven is far more profound than mere physical proximity.

The denial of Mary’s perpetual virginity (which was a radical innovation of the last 200 to 250 years, and *not* the view of the Protestant founders) exhibits

an inadequate understanding of holy places. Consecrated persons and places are “set aside” for God’s holy purposes.

Mary was perpetually a virgin not because normative married life is “bad” (a common unjust accusation against it) but rather, because consecrated virginity is a *higher* calling, and being the Mother of God is higher still.

Someone stated in a Facebook discussion that Catholic beliefs about Mary would mean she wasn’t a “normal wife.” I replied that Mary was anything *but* a “normal” Jewish wife in the first place. She was suddenly “with child” miraculously by the Holy Spirit and gave birth to Jesus: God the Son.

Most Protestants still accept the virgin birth. Consecrated virginity is far less notable than those two events. Yet the Incarnation and the virgin birth are widely accepted, while perpetual virginity is widely rejected. The traditional unity of the three related things is no longer comprehended by many.

Too many people assume that consecrated virginity is unimaginable or impossible, and that one could not possibly desire it. I think this prior assumption lies at the root of much of the objection. St. Paul (1 Cor. 7) maintains that the single state allows a higher, undistracted devotion to the Lord.

Why should we think, then, that the Mother of God would be any other than a perpetual virgin, devoted to God the Father, and her Son, God the Son?

The Blessed Virgin Mary was consecrated by God, with her consent. Some people are called to be “married to the Lord.” It’s precisely because we are so tied to the earth that we so often can’t grasp heavenly realities that are clearly stated in Scripture (by both Jesus and Paul, in talking about singleness and voluntary eunuchs).

Some things can be so entirely appropriate that they almost approach necessity: not strictly logically but perhaps spiritually. Even the Crucifixion (and perhaps the Incarnation itself) was not *strictly* necessary (God *could* have simply declared those people saved who would have been saved by Jesus’ death on the Cross), but they are sublimely important in the overall scheme of things.

God chose to save mankind by means of them. The virgin birth and Mary’s perpetual virginity were the means that God chose to create the appropriate context in which the Incarnation occurred.

In Catholic thinking, and the ancient apostolic tradition, Mary's perpetual virginity is a protection, so to speak, of the miraculous nature of the Incarnation and Jesus' birth. It's a Christocentric doctrine: just as all Marian doctrines are.

But so many critics are almost obsessed with unfairly blasting the Catholic Church for supposedly raising Mary to an idolatrous state that they miss the fundamental reason for Marian beliefs: to exalt and focus on our Lord Jesus Christ.

A Rationalist Objection to the Virgin Birth

In Partu virginity refers to the belief that Jesus was born miraculously, without the usual physical travail of childbirth. Mary's virginity was preserved in the biological sense: i.e., the hymen remained intact.

Virginity, as classically understood, is not simply the absence of sexual activity (how we use the term today). It also had a literal physiological component (intact hymen). That's why, in order for the Blessed Virgin Mary to be a "perpetual virgin" in this sense, Jesus' birth (like His conception) had to be supernatural rather than natural. Jesus' conception, Incarnation, and *in partu* birth were all miraculous, although His being in Mary's womb for nine months obviously was natural. This is what the Catholic Church has taught.

A Catholic described objections to this belief (in either agreement or perplexity over) and stated that it would render the placenta and umbilical cord irrelevant, making Mary's pregnancy "appear as a fiction or myth or merely a play or a joke" and indeed, "comical." He thought the traditional Catholic view (which he thought entailed no implantation of the embryo in Mary's uterus) was "rationally in-congruent and ridiculous." He concluded that he wouldn't be able to defend the Catholic dogma if someone asked him about it. The following was my (off-the-cuff) reply:

Why would you think you have to explain every objection to every miracle that is believed in Christianity? These factors are no more "ridiculous" than the virgin birth itself, if we are to rank levels of supposed "implausibility."

This is a dogma. We believe by faith first; we don't have to "solve every problem" before we believe. That's not Christian faith, given by God's grace, but man-centered rationalism.

There are always "difficulties" and "problems" in any large system of thought. That doesn't prevent people from believing in the tenets of those systems. This includes physical science, where there are a host of things that remain unexplained (e.g., what caused the Big Bang; whether light is a particle or a wave, how life began, the complete lack of evidence for life anywhere else, et cetera). People don't disbelieve in the Big Bang because we can't explain *everything* about it.

Likewise with Catholic dogma. If even science requires faith and axiomatic presuppositions, how much more must religion, which is not identical to philosophy or reason in the first place? God could, for example, have simply made the placenta and umbilical cord disappear when the time came to be born (it doesn't mean they were never there or that there were no natural components). No biggie for Him — the One who parted the Red Sea, created the universe, and performed a host of other miracles.

This is the same sort of inconsistent thinking and false premise that causes folks to reject the physical, substantial presence of our Lord Jesus in the Eucharist, and Doubting Thomas to disbelieve that Jesus had risen, or those who won't believe unless they have some sign-miracle on demand.

All of this requires faith, and faith comes through grace accepted in free will. One can come up with any number of possible theories dealing with the placenta, and so forth, but I refuse to accept the premise that holds that we must do that in order to believe the dogma, and solving this “problem” is of little interest to me, even as an apologist. It's pretty low on the list of priorities.

We'd all be in very rough shape if our personal “epistemology” required us to know every jot and tittle of everything before we could believe it. Most things we do or believe in life we don't fully understand at all. One would have to argue that *every* miracle is “ridiculous” in the sense that it is unable to be consistently sustained. God's eternity and self-existence is absurd, *creatio ex nihilo* is, transubstantiation, the Hypostatic Union, the Resurrection, and on and on.

So why should a different, “superstandard” be applied to Christianity and particularly to Catholic dogma?

Martin Luther and the Immaculate Purification of Mary

My job as an apologist often involves defending aspects of Catholic belief that are “distinctive” over against Protestantism. We’re asked why we believe thus-and-so, and the apologist steps in to provide some rationales and answers. But we also sometimes attempt to demonstrate *common ground*, and in so doing, in effect, assert, “See? We’re not that different from you in *this* respect.” This is a good thing, because it fosters Christian unity.

Thus, I will often cite some “Catholic” or nearly Catholic belief held by Martin Luther (1483-1546), the founder of Protestantism, in order to show that some doctrines are not *solely* Catholic, since the very originator of the system held it. In fact, I’ve studied Luther so closely that in some specific areas, I’d venture to say that not one in a thousand Lutherans would be familiar with what I’ve found.

One of the most fascinating of Luther’s beliefs has to do with the question of Mary’s Immaculate Conception (her being preserved from Original Sin from the moment of her conception). Luther had a rather “high” Mariology in many respects.

In 1522, he wrote in his *Little Prayer Book*: “She is full of grace [*voll Gnaden*]; so that she may be recognized as without any sin. . . . God’s grace fills her with all gifts and frees her from all evil.” In a 1527 sermon, preached “on the day of the Conception of Mary the Mother of God,” Luther remarkably proclaimed:

It is a sweet and pious belief that the infusion of Mary’s soul was effected without original sin; so that in the very infusion of her soul she was also purified from original sin and adorned with God’s gifts, receiving a pure soul infused by God; thus from the first moment she began to live she was free from all sin.^{[12](#)}

As so often with Luther, however, his views evolve, or sometimes vacillate or contradict each other. This was the case on this point, though he remained *far* closer to the Catholic position than the general Protestant one.

In his *Disputation on the Divinity and Humanity of Christ*^{[13](#)} (February 28,

1540), he placed Mary's "purification" at the *conception of Christ*: "In his conception all of Mary's flesh and blood was purified so that nothing sinful remained."

In 1543, in his work, *Vom Schem Hamphoras und vom Geschlecht Christi*, he affirmed that the Blessed Virgin Mary was "saved and purified from original sin through the Holy Spirit."¹⁴ But he stated this without reference to *when* it occurred. We may plausibly infer that he continued to believe that it was at Christ's conception (given his 1540 statement).

The most fascinating aspect of all this, in my opinion, is that St. Thomas Aquinas had expressed something very similar, almost three centuries earlier:

The second purification effected in her by the Holy Ghost was by means of the conception of Christ which was the operation of the Holy Ghost. And in respect of this, it may be said that He purified her entirely from the fomes [i.e., the stain of sin].¹⁵

Luther was actually following a strain of Catholic scholastic thought that the Church at length deemed as erroneous. Yes, even St. Thomas Aquinas could occasionally be mistaken!

Can it be said, then, in summary, that Luther was "opposed" to the Catholic dogma of the Immaculate Conception: fully defined at the highest level of dogmatic certainty, in 1854, by Blessed Pope Pius IX?

Well, yes and no. If we mean the dogma as it is believed by the Catholic Church, and the *timing* of God's special act of grace (at Mary's own conception), he eventually *denied that aspect* of it, but if we mean "removal of Original Sin," which is the essence and heart of the doctrine, then he did *not* deny it.

Luther *never* believed that the act occurred at Mary's *conception*, because he originally thought it occurred at *ensoulment*, which he separated from conception (as most people — including St. Thomas Aquinas — still did in the late Middle Ages). The timing in his view simply shifted from the time of ensoulment to the time of (or shortly before) Christ's conception.

The common ground in his views is God's removal of Original Sin from Mary by a special act of grace, and he seems to think that she was free of all actual sin, too, after Christ's conception. These two things, as far as they go, are very "Catholic" indeed!

In light of a consideration of all the relevant evidence, I think it's accurate

to refer to Luther's fully developed position as Mary's *Immaculate Purification*. It's not identical to the Catholic position (which wasn't yet a Catholic dogma during his lifetime), but it is far more similar to it than to any denominational Protestant position today, including that of Lutheranism.

¹² Catholic biographer Hartmann Grisar's translation, 1917.

¹³ February 28, 1540; 1992 translation by Lutheran Eric W. Gritsch.

¹⁴ 2004 translation by historian Beth Kreitzer.

¹⁵ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, III, Q. 27, art. 3.

Mary's Immaculate Conception

Are there explicit, “direct” *proofs* of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Bible? No. Does the Bible ever teach that all doctrines must be *explicitly* contained in it? No. Is this doctrine *harmonious* with what is in Scripture and supported by analogy and plausibility? Yes.

Luke 1:28: And he came to her and said, “Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you!” [In the RSV, Catholic edition, “favored one” is rendered as “full of grace.”]

Many translations use “favor” here, yet even the great Baptist Greek scholar A. T. Robertson¹⁶ agrees that the word involved (*kecharitomene*) means “full of grace which thou hast received.” It’s derived from the Greek root *charis* (grace). Presbyterian Greek scholar Marvin R. Vincent agrees that it means “endued with grace.”¹⁷

Now, a Catholic asks, “What does it mean to be *full* of grace?” For St. Paul, grace is the antithesis and overcomer of sin:

Romans 6:14, 19, 22: For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace . . . so now yield your members to righteousness for sanctification. . . . But now that you have been set free from sin . . . the return you get is sanctification and its end, eternal life.

Moreover, we are *saved* by grace:

Ephesians 2:8: For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God. (cf. Acts 15:11; Rom. 3:24; Titus 2:11; 3:7)

It follows, I submit, that for a person to be *full* of grace is to both be saved and to be exceptionally, completely holy. Therefore, Mary is holy and sinless. The essence of the Immaculate Conception is sinlessness, and this is deduced from many biblical passages about the antithetical relation of grace to sin, and salvation and its accompanying sanctification to sin.

The only remaining question is: *When* did God apply this grace to Mary? We know she possessed it as a young woman, at the Annunciation. Catholics believe that God gave her the grace at her conception so as to avoid the

Original Sin that she inevitably would have inherited, being human, *but* for God's preventive grace, which saved her from falling into the pit of sin.

But do we ever observe in the Bible, persons being extraordinarily sanctified, even before their birth, as we believe Mary was? Yes, we do; for example, the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah:

Isaiah 49:1, 5: The LORD called me from the womb. . . . And now the LORD says, who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him, for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD. (cf. Job 31:15, 18; Judges 16:17)

Jeremiah 1:5: Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations. (cf. Sir. 49:7)

"Consecrated" or "sanctified" (KJV) in Jeremiah 1:5 is the Hebrew word *quadash* (Strong's word no. 6942). According to Gesenius's *Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon of the Old Testament* (p. 725), in this instance it meant "to declare any one holy." Jeremiah was thus consecrated or sanctified from the womb; possibly from conception. This is fairly analogous to the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. We know Jeremiah was a very holy man. Was he sinless, though? Perhaps he was. We also have New Testament evidence of such sanctification before birth (John the Baptist and St. Paul):

Luke 1:15: [F]or he will be great before the Lord, and he shall drink no wine nor strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. (cf. Luke 1:41, 44)

Galatians 1:15: he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace.

We know that John the Baptist was also a very holy man. Was he sinless? We can't know that *for sure* from the biblical data. St. Catherine of Siena, for one, believed that he never sinned (*A Treatise of Prayer*). But we do know for sure that he was sanctified from the womb.

Therefore, by analogy and plausibility, we can and may conclude that it is "biblical" to believe in faith that Mary was immaculately conceived. Nothing in the Bible *contradicts* this belief. It does require *faith*, of course. God restored to Mary the innocence that Eve had before the Fall and filled her with grace in order to prepare her for her unspeakably sublime, sanctified task as the Mother of God the Son. Why should He *not* do so?

¹⁶ A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1930), vol. 2, 13.

¹⁷ *Word Studies in the New Testament*, vol. 1, 259.

Mary Is the Mother of God

1. Jesus called Himself the “Son of God”:

John 10:36: “[D]o you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?”

2. “Son of God” means the same as “God” in the Jewish mind:

John 5:18: This was why the Jews sought all the more to kill him, because he not only broke the sabbath but also called God his Father, making himself equal with God.

3. The Blessed Virgin Mary is the Mother of the Son of God; therefore (see number 2), she is the Mother of God:

Luke 1:31-32, 35: And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High. . . . And the angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.”

Here is also a second way to establish Mary as the Mother of God (*Theotokos* in Greek):

Luke 1:43: And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord [*kurios*] should come to me?

John 20:28: Thomas answered him, “My Lord [*kurios*] and my God [*theos*]!”

“Lord [*kurios*] God [*theos*]”: Luke 1:6, 32, 68; 4:8, 12; 10:27; 20:37. Therefore, “Lord [*kurios*] equals God [*theos*]. Jesus is called both in John 20:28. Mary is the Mother of the Lord (Luke 1:43). Therefore, she is the mother of God, since *Lord = God*. Case closed.

We don’t say of mothers that they are the mother of their child’s *body*, but of the child, and the child has a body and a soul. The mothers didn’t create the soul; God did. Likewise, with Jesus: Mary is the Mother of Jesus, who is

God the Son. Thus, she is the Mother of God. It's wrong and even illogical to say she was the mother of His body. No; she was the mother of the Divine Person, Jesus, who had a human nature and also a divine nature (that she had nothing to do with).

But she is still the mother of the Person, regardless of that, as any mother is the mother of a person who has a soul directly created by God.

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Our Protestant friends in Christ often challenge us to find “proofs” of our doctrines in the Bible. When it comes to the doctrine of the Assumption, almost all of them think or say, “There is *nothing whatever* in the Bible about *that!*”

I’d like to examine this question from two perspectives: whether the challenge they make is itself based on a biblical model, and whether we can find anything in Scripture to support our dogmatic belief in Mary’s bodily Assumption into heaven.

The assumption (no pun intended!) casually made by those who argue in this way is the notion that all doctrines believed by Christians must be *explicitly* mentioned in Scripture. This is a key aspect of the Protestant foundational belief in *sola Scriptura* (Scripture is the *only infallible* authority or rule of faith).

But the Bible, in fact, *never teaches* this idea (nor *sola Scriptura* itself). Protestants can’t prove it from Scripture. Moreover, there are other doctrines held by Protestants, too, based on no biblical indications at all. One clear example is the canon of Scripture. The Bible never lists its own books. The Bible’s table of contents comes entirely from Christian Tradition.

Yet Protestants accept it (minus seven books); and this is contrary to *sola Scriptura*. Despite all this, we are unreasonably asked to prove everything we believe as Catholics, from explicit biblical passages.

Catholics believe that all Catholic and Christian doctrines must be in harmony with Scripture, that they must not contradict it, and that some doctrines are able to be supported only indirectly, implicitly, or by deduction from other related Bible passages.

All Catholic doctrines have scriptural support in *some* sense (this is my main specialty as an apologist). We also believe in sacred tradition: itself always in harmony with Scripture. Sometimes (as in the present case), a doctrine is “stronger” in tradition.

I agree that there is no *direct* proof of Mary’s Assumption in Scripture. But

there is strong deductive and analogical evidence. The deductive argument has to do with the consequences of Mary's Immaculate Conception: a doctrine more directly indicated in Scripture (e.g., Luke 1:28).

Bodily death and decay are the result of sin and the Fall of man (Gen. 3:16-19; Ps. 16:10). An absence of actual and Original Sin would allow for instant bodily resurrection. It's as if Mary goes back to before the Fall (for this reason the Church Fathers call her the New Eve).

Jesus' Resurrection makes possible universal resurrection (1 Cor. 15:13, 16) and the redemption of our bodies as well as souls (1 Cor. 15:20-23). Mary's Assumption is the "firstfruits," sign, and type of the general resurrection of all (created) mankind; she exemplifies the age in which death and sin are conquered once and for all (1 Cor. 15:26).

The analogical argument is a second line of approach: biblical examples that have strong similarity in important respects to Mary's bodily Assumption. Here are five such analogies:

2 Kings 2:1, 11: [T]he LORD was about to *take Elijah up* to heaven by a whirlwind. . . . And Elijah *went up* by a whirlwind *into heaven*.

2 Corinthians 12:2-3: I know a man in Christ [i.e., Paul himself] who fourteen years ago was *caught up to the third heaven*. . . . And I know that this man was *caught up into Paradise* — whether *in the body* or out of the body I do not know, God knows.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17: And the dead in Christ will *rise* first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be *caught up together with them in the clouds* to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord.

Hebrews 11:5: By faith Enoch was *taken up* so that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God had *taken* him. (cf. Gen. 5:24)

Revelation 11:11-12: But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood up on their feet. . . . Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "*Come up* hither!" And in the sight of their foes *they went up to heaven in a cloud*.

In three of these instances, the person didn't die (in one, the person even came back); in two, the persons died first. The Church hasn't declared whether Mary died. All these events occur by virtue of the *power of God*, not the *intrinsic ability* of the persons.

Jesus ascended by His own power, but the Blessed Virgin Mary was assumed by the power of her Son Jesus' victory over death. Hers was an immediate resurrection. One day all who are saved will be bodily resurrected. Mary was the first after the Resurrection — quite appropriately (and even, I submit, expected), since she was Jesus' own Mother.

Mary the Queen Mother and Queen of Heaven

The standard Catholic apologetics argument in defense of Mary as the queen mother and Queen of Heaven is based on the analogy of the practice of the ancient kings of Judah, who made their mothers, rather than their wives, queens. Thus, Solomon, the son of David, had his mother (Bathsheba) as queen, and she even had a throne next to his, at his right hand (1 Kings 2:19). And as the queen mother, she could make requests of him. The queen mother also wore a crown (Jer. 13:18).

By analogy, we argue that Mary, as the Mother of God and Queen of Heaven, can be sought in intercession, in order to ask her Son a request; and that her requests have great power because of her exalted position in the kingdom (James 5:16).

It's an analogy, but (as many are) an imperfect one, because Bathsheba (being a sinner like the rest of us, and once an adulteress) would not always ask for the right thing, whereas Mary (being sinless and perfected in heaven and rather unique and exalted among creatures) *would*. The analogy is to the *office*, not every single jot and tittle.

It's like arguing for the office of the papacy by the original example of Peter and the prototype that he provided in the Bible. The office of the papacy is not in the slightest undermined because Peter betrayed Jesus, or because he was once rebuked by Jesus, who said, "Get behind me, Satan" (Matt. 16:23) or because Paul rebuked him for hypocrisy. Nor does this undermine papal infallibility, which is a limited charism, and not directly connected with whether the particular pope involved is a sinner.

Likewise, biblical inspiration is not undermined because God used sinners to write His inspired Bible (murderers such as Moses, David, and Paul, and betrayers and wimps such as Peter; former despised tax collectors such as Matthew). The "office" of Scripture writer, in other words, was not rendered null and void because sinners occupied it.

Another similar imperfect analogy would be King David (the adulterer and murderer) as a type, shadow, or forerunner of the Messiah, Jesus. This is a clear scriptural motif in the prophets (Isa. 9:6-7; Jer. 23:5-6; 30:9; Ezek.

34:23-24; 37:24-25; Zech. 12:8; cf. Luke 1:31-33, 68-69). His sin did not render the covenant God made with him null and void (provided that he sincerely repented: as he in fact did). He (a great sinner) remained the prototype for the Messiah.

By the same token, Bathsheba could be a prototype for and analogy of Mary as queen mother, even though a sinner herself (as we all are).

The Virgin Mary in the Book of Revelation

Revelation 12:1-6, 13, 17: And a great portent appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; she was with child and she cried out in her pangs of birth, in anguish for delivery. And another portent appeared in heaven; behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems upon his heads. His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bear a child, that he might devour her child when she brought it forth; she brought forth a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which to be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days. . . . And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had borne the male child. . . . Then the dragon was angry with the woman, and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea.

The woman's son is described as "one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne" (Rev. 12:5). Can it be plausibly denied that this is Jesus? If it isn't Jesus, who is it? And if it is, then how can anyone deny that His mother is Mary? Catholics believe that there is a double application here to the Church and to Mary (a common phenomenon in Scripture). But to deny the application to Mary altogether runs into the exegetical absurdities. Here are relevant cross-references:

Psalms 2:7-9: I will tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to me, "You are my son, today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall *break them with a rod of iron*, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

Revelation 19:13-15: He is clad in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, followed him on white horses. From his mouth issues a sharp sword with which to smite the nations, and he will *rule them with a rod of iron*; he will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.

Protestant commentators agree as well. Baptist A. T. Robertson says of Rev. 12:5: “There is here, of course, direct reference to the birth of Jesus from Mary.” *Eerdmans Bible Commentary* likewise states: “The ‘catching up’ is sufficiently similar to the victorious ascension of Jesus to make plain its real meaning in this context.”

Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary states: “rod of iron . . . ch. 2:27; Psalm 2:9, which passages prove the Lord Jesus to be meant. Any interpretation which ignores this must be wrong.” It also notes the reference to the Ascension.

It can have a double application to the Church as well, but if we’re talking about Jesus’ Mother, that has to be Mary, because Jesus wasn’t *born of* the Church; He *set up* the Church.

Biblical Analogies for Marian Apparitions

By analogy, biblical accounts of “appearances” of those who have died are of the same essential nature as a Marian apparition. Angels (i.e., creatures, like men) might also be included in such a survey, but stories of angels are relatively well known, and for the sake of closer analogy and brevity, I have selected only passages with men or the appearance of men. Several of these passages involve foretelling of the future, in a manner not unlike that of the apparitions at Fátima in 1917. And several historical figures are named as appearing after death (Samuel, Onias, Jeremiah, Moses, and Elijah).

1 Samuel 28:12-15: When *the woman saw Samuel*, she cried out with a loud voice; and the woman said to Saul, “Why have you deceived me? You are Saul.” The king said to her, “Have no fear; what do you see?” And the woman said to Saul, “I see a god coming up out of the earth.” He said to her, “What is his appearance?” And she said, “An old man is coming up; and he is wrapped in a robe.” *And Saul knew that it was Samuel*, and he bowed with his face to the ground, and did obeisance. *Then Samuel said to Saul*, “Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?” Saul answered, “I am in great distress; for the Philistines are warring against me, and God has turned away from me and answers me no more, either by prophets or by dreams; therefore I have summoned you to tell me what I shall do.”

Ezekiel 40:3-4: When he brought me there, behold, there was *a man, whose appearance was like bronze*, with a line of flax and a measuring reed in his hand; and he was standing in the gateway. And the man said to me, “Son of man, look with your eyes, and hear with your ears, and set your mind upon all that I shall show you, for you were brought here in order that I might show it to you; declare all that you see to the house of Israel.”

Daniel 8:15-19: When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I sought to understand it; and behold, *there stood before me one having the appearance of a man*. And I heard a man’s voice between the banks of the Ulai, and it called, “Gabriel, make this man understand the vision.”

So he came near where I stood; and when he came, I was frightened and fell upon my face. But he said to me, “Understand, O son of man, that the vision is for the time of the end.” As he was speaking to me, I fell into a deep sleep with my face to the ground; but he touched me and set me on my feet. He said, “Behold, I will make known to you what shall be at the latter end of the indignation; for it pertains to the appointed time of the end.”

Daniel 10:4-21: On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river, that is, the Tigris, I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, *a man clothed in linen*, whose loins were girded with gold of Uphaz. His body was like beryl, *his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like flaming torches*, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the noise of a multitude. And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me did not see the vision, but a great trembling fell upon them, and they fled to hide themselves. So I was left alone and saw this great vision, and no strength was left in me; my radiant appearance was fearfully changed, and I retained no strength. Then I heard the sound of his words; and when I heard the sound of his words, I fell on my face in a deep sleep with my face to the ground. And behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. And he said to me, “O Daniel, man greatly beloved, give heed to the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for now *I have been sent to you.*” While he was speaking this word to me, I stood up trembling. Then he said to me, “Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your mind to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words. The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, so I left him there with the prince of the kingdom of Persia and *came to make you understand what is to befall your people in the latter days. For the vision is for days yet to come.*” When he had spoken to me according to these words, I turned my face toward the ground and was dumb. And behold, one in the likeness of the sons of men touched my lips; then I opened my mouth and spoke. I said to him who stood before me, “O my lord, by reason of the vision pains have come upon me, and I retain no strength. How can my lord’s servant talk with my lord? For now no strength remains in me, and no breath is

left in me.” Again one having the appearance of a man touched me and strengthened me. And he said, “O man greatly beloved, fear not, peace be with you; be strong and of good courage.” And when he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, “Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me.” Then he said, “*Do you know why I have come to you?* But now I will return to fight against the prince of Persia; and when I am through with him, lo, the prince of Greece will come. But I will tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth: there is none who contends by my side against these except Michael, your prince.”

Sirach 46:19-20: Before the time of his eternal sleep, *Samuel* called men to witness before the Lord and his anointed: “I have not taken any one’s property, not so much as a pair of shoes.” And no man accused him. *Even after he had fallen asleep he prophesied and revealed to the king his death, and lifted up his voice out of the earth in prophecy, to blot out the wickedness of the people.*

2 Maccabees 5:1-4: About this time Antiochus made his second invasion of Egypt. And it happened that over all the city, for almost forty days, *there appeared golden-clad horsemen charging through the air*, in companies fully armed with lances and drawn swords — troops of horsemen drawn up, attacks and counterattacks made on this side and on that, brandishing of shields, massing of spears, hurling of missiles, the flash of golden trappings, and armor of all sorts. Therefore all men prayed that the apparition might prove to have been a good omen.

2 Maccabees 10:29-30: When the battle became fierce, *there appeared to the enemy from heaven five resplendent men on horses with golden bridles*, and they were leading the Jews. Surrounding Maccabeus and protecting him with their own armor and weapons, they kept him from being wounded. And they showered arrows and thunderbolts upon the enemy, so that, confused and blinded, they were thrown into disorder and cut to pieces.

2 Maccabees 15:11-16: He armed each of them not so much with confidence in shields and spears as with the inspiration of brave words, and he cheered them all by relating *a dream, a sort of vision*, which was worthy of belief. *What he saw was this: Onias, who had been high priest*, a noble and good man, of modest bearing and gentle manner, one who spoke fittingly and had been trained from childhood in all that

belongs to excellence, was praying with outstretched hands for the whole body of the Jews. Then likewise a man appeared, distinguished by his gray hair and dignity, and of marvelous majesty and authority. And Onias spoke, saying, *“This is a man who loves the brethren and prays much for the people and the holy city, Jeremiah, the prophet of God.”* Jeremiah stretched out his right hand and gave to Judas a golden sword, and as he gave it he addressed him thus: *“Take this holy sword, a gift from God, with which you will strike down your adversaries.”*

Matthew 17:1-4: And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain apart. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light. And behold, *there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him.* And Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is well that we are here; if you wish, I will make three booths here, one for you and one for *Moses* and one for *Elijah*.” (cf. Mark 9:4-5)

Matthew 27:51-53: And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom; and the earth shook, and the rocks were split; *the tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.*

Acts 16:9: And *a vision appeared to Paul* in the night: *a man of Macedonia* was standing beseeching him and saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.”

Revelation 4:4: Round the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were *twenty-four elders, clad in white garments*, with golden crowns upon their heads. (cf. Rev. 4:10; 5:5-14; 7:11, 13; 11:16; 14:3; 19:4)

Revelation 6:9-10: When he opened the fifth seal, *I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God* and for the witness they had borne; they cried out with a loud voice, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before thou wilt judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth?” (cf. Rev. 11:3-13)

Protestant Difficulties Regarding Papal Infallibility

Popes can err if they are not talking in the limited circumstances in which we believe papal infallibility applies to them, per the 1870 dogma. The pope is not some kind of inspired oracle, like a walking Bible. If, for example, the pope said over lunch, “The earth is flat,” that would not be in line with the special conditions of what we define as “infallible” because it was merely a private remark and has nothing to do with faith or morals.

If the pope wrote an encyclical, however, and stated, “I define and declare *ex cathedra*, as pope, speaking for all Catholics, that henceforth, all the Catholic faithful must regard the earth as flat,” then this would be a crisis for Catholics, since it would be a blatant example of a falsehood promulgated under the proper conditions, thus overthrowing the dogma.

We say that this has never happened. If we look at the very “best” case our critics come up with, Pope Honorius, we find that he was making a statement in a private letter.¹⁸ Right off the bat, then, it had nothing to do with infallibility. Their best case is literally a non sequitur: it doesn’t disprove infallibility in the slightest.

Proper definitions are crucial in any debate. On this issue, that seems to be about 75 percent of the battle. Folks don’t want to accept Catholic explanations and want almost to rewrite the dogma according to their own whims. I understand that. I played that game myself in 1990 when I detested infallibility and thought it was the most ridiculous thing in the world (or at least in theology). But that game is ultimately an intellectually dishonest endeavor.

Protestants seem often unable to distinguish infallibility from inspiration. This is the main problem of comprehension, I suspect. It’s understandable, because it’s a new thing. The Protestant outlook is diametrically opposed to infallibility because it is so contrary to *sola Scriptura*: one of the two pillars of the so-called Reformation. That’s why I fought it so ferociously myself: because I was a huge *sola Scriptura* guy and Luther devotee to boot, and I had already been doing apologetics for nine years, so I loved to argue and dispute.

It comes back to prior premises. You can't look at infallibility from Protestant eyes. You have to try to understand it from Catholic eyes, even though not yet Catholic. We always see things through our own premises, so to change them provisionally, to grasp another, is difficult. It's like debate, too. To debate well, one should understand the opposing position at least as well as his opponent does. And that takes a lot of work and sort of a mental discipline.

It seems overdramatic (in *ex cathedra* statements such as those concerning the Immaculate Conception and Assumption of Mary), to say that whoever disbelieves has fallen away from the Faith, et cetera, but again, one has to understand that Catholics believe that we have to accept all that the Church teaches; therefore, if a pronouncement at this high level is made, it has to be accepted, lest we have destroyed the principle of Catholic authority, and in that sense have rejected the Catholic Faith.

The opposite of this is the “cafeteria Catholic” game that liberal dissidents play. This is like a Protestant rejecting *sola Scriptura*. One who did so wouldn't be much of a Protestant anymore.

To use the analogy of government, it's the difference between having an idea for a bill and having a bill drawn from that thought passing the House and Senate and being signed into law by the president. The second is binding as law; the first is not at all. The president or Senate Leader or House Speaker might have talked about a proposed bill, but it has no binding force when it is simply being talked about. When it is made a law, it does have binding power.

So what we're saying is that when the pope binds the entire faithful to a dogma and declares that it is to be held by all Catholics, we believe in faith in such cases that he is given by God the gift of infallibility: protection from error.

If the objection is that it is fideism with no objective proof, then we appeal to history and show how alleged counterfactuals such as Honorius don't succeed and that no such scenarios have succeeded in disproving papal infallibility.

Most Protestants (especially if they're like I used to be) simply assume that such a thing is impossible. They lack faith in God's capacity to enact His supernatural gifts in men.

I reply that it takes much more faith to believe in the inspiration of Scripture (that the huge amount of words in the Bible are not self-contradictory and are all “God-breathed”) than infallibility in limited circumstances, so that if one is believed, the other should not be all that difficult to accept in faith.

God had to use lousy sinners such as Moses and David and Paul and Peter and Matthew to write the Bible. What else did He have: except for a few recorded words from sinless Mary? Thus, sin and the foibles and follies of men are no barrier to Him if He has some purpose (He even used a donkey once). Protestants forget that these inspired words in Scripture were written by very human and sinful men, as we all are. They came from men, just as papal decrees come from men.

All those objections make no sense analogically. If one thing is believed, the other should not be impossible to accept. The real root of the error, I believe, is in the *sola Scriptura* mentality, which holds (with no biblical support) that only the Bible is infallible and that no human institutions (Church, popes, councils) can be, because only the Bible is, because the Bible says so (but in fact it never does, and it states the contrary). That is where the root error and circular reasoning lies.

¹⁸ Pope Honorius, who reigned from 625-638, used imprecise language regarding the heresy of Monothelitism, which held that Christ had one will, combining the divine and human wills. He did this merely in a personal letter to a patriarch, rather than a magisterial document, binding the entire Church. He was condemned by the Third Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (the sixth ecumenical council: 680-681). But Pope Leo II, in his affirmation of the council, made it clear, in explanation, that Honorius had neither *embraced* nor *endorsed* the heresy but, rather, was only negligent in not condemning it. In any event, since he did not declare a heresy as true and binding, his error had nothing whatsoever to do with papal infallibility (as Catholics define or understand it); therefore, this cannot be regarded in any way, shape, matter, or form, as a *disproof* of that Catholic dogma.

Why It Is Easy to Know What Catholics Should Believe

I contend that Catholic teachings are abundantly clear, as to what the faithful Catholic is required to believe or disbelieve. All such teachings are plainly laid out, especially now in the *Catechism*. Virtually all the important theological issues have already been worked through and worked out by minds far greater than ours, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We don't have to work that hard to understand. We simply look it up and believe it, on the authority of the Church. The only things that are up in the air are matters of the utmost mystery, that humans can barely understand at all, such as the internal Catholic predestination debate. But that has no bearing on practical, day-to-day Catholic living anyway.

It's not necessary to interpret infallibly; it is necessary only to know and believe by faith, based on many cumulative, converging evidences, that there is an infallible authority. One simply accepts that. It's not a game of philosophy, but of religious faith, grounded in reason and the Bible and historical precedent.

The teachings are authoritative, if they come down to us from papal encyclicals, ecumenical councils, or the *Catechism*. All the fine-tuning and hair-splitting distinctions are for scholars and theologians and apologists to have fun arguing about; that's what they get paid to do. But that has little relevance for Joe Q. Catholic.

The Protestant "infallibility regress" argument in apologetics states that the individual Catholic still needs to interpret even an infallible decree. Therefore, he is in no better epistemological position than the Protestant, because he is not an infallible interpreter, and whether decrees are in fact infallible does not overcome the problem (so we're told).

But this approach fails, because *Christianity is not philosophy*. One cannot achieve airtight, mathematical certainty in matters of faith. The Catholic authority structure is quite sufficient for us, as it was for the apostles and Fathers.

It's always easy to take swipes at the Big Red Barn of Catholicism. But the question is: What is the better *alternative*? Then, when we see how Protestants try to resolve authority problems, it gets truly self-defeating and absurd. That's not true of Catholicism. It's not philosophically airtight, but very few things are. Still, our system of theology and ecclesiology doesn't break down and become logically self-defeating, as all forms of Protestantism do, the more they are scrutinized.

The Catholic is not advocating absolute philosophical certainty (a thing that is generally rare as it is), but rather, the certitude of faith, based on many converging evidences of many sorts.

I deny that it is difficult to determine what Catholics believe and *must* believe. Anyone who can read and exercise rudimentary logic can understand what the Church teaches, from the *Catechism*. It's easy for critics to talk in generalities and try to cast doubt on everything, just as agnostics do with Christianity and the Bible. But unless they get down to particulars and show how the Catholic system fails in those examples and, moreover, demonstrate that they are important enough examples to be relevant to a debate about whether Catholicism or Protestantism has a more coherent and workable rule of faith and authority structure, they haven't accomplished anything.

One can play philosophical skeptic all day long; it's a fun game, but irrelevant to the discussion, since Christianity (in any form — not just Catholic) is not a mere philosophy or rationalistic exercise. It is a religious faith and requires a reasoned (not irrational) faith. Faith is not mathematical demonstration.

The premises of the “infallibility regress” argument are absurd to begin with, because it has to assume the untruth (Christianity is mere philosophy and operates totally on that plane where it comes to determination of true doctrine) even to make the argument. Whether the one who argues in this way is aware of it or not, that's what the premise amounts to. I deny the premise, and I think that anyone who would only examine it more closely would also deny it.

All anyone has to do to understand Catholicism is know how to read and have the faith and willingness to accept what the *Catechism* proclaims. I think a lack of faith is really the bottom line with Protestants who reject Catholic claims. They don't have enough faith to believe that God could and does protect a Church, which is a human institution, and Christian apostolic

doctrine. They have the faith to believe in the higher, more involved gift of the *inspiration* of human sinners (Scripture) but not the lesser and far more limited gift of *infallibility* of human sinners (a pope and ecumenical councils and apostolic succession and sacred tradition). Even that makes no sense. They have great faith in one instance that requires *more* faith and have none (and outright skepticism) where *less* faith is required.

We aren't making the individual the final arbiter of true doctrine, as Protestants do. To posit and believe by faith in an infallible Church makes perfect sense, because Christians already believe in an inspired Scripture, and that Scripture has much indication of an infallible Church. That is consistent.

But to fall back on a mere noninfallible individual believer, who supposedly will figure all this stuff out, or else have to operate in a sort of limbo or agnostic or uncertain state in their Christian life, is not only absurd and perfectly implausible in the abstract, but chaotic in actual practice, as history has amply shown.

The fact remains that there is no chaos with regard to Catholic doctrine, for those willing to accept what the Church has clearly proclaimed, whereas there is plenty within Protestantism. The "infallibility regress" game falls flat every time, when properly scrutinized. And it is very laborious and time-consuming. Disproving error is always a lot harder than assertion of error.

The Bible Never Says That Jesus Is God? Wrong!

We apologists hear every fable, myth, and tall tale regarding theology that anyone could ever imagine. I've heard this one for over thirty years. In fact, one of my first research projects in the early '80s, after I took up apologetics (back in my evangelical days), was to collect biblical passages that provide evidence for the Holy Trinity and the deity, or divinity, of Jesus Christ.

I'd like to highlight a few of the more obvious, undeniable, plain passages, to counter those who make such negative claims.

John 1:1, 14: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.

This is one of the most well-known “prooftexts.” Jesus is eternal (here, “beginning” means “eternity past”). He was with God the Father and is God the Son. To make sure that the reader has no misunderstanding, John (v. 14) reiterates that the “Word” referred to is the Son, and notes that He “became flesh” (the Incarnation). Only the Son has a body. The Word = Jesus = God.

John 10:30: I and the Father are one.

Jesus' hearers, unbelieving Jews, certainly understood His intent in saying this, because they tried to stone Him, as the next verse informs us, since they didn't believe His claim, which, if untrue, would have been intolerable blasphemy. John 10:33 informs us that the unbelieving Jews tried to stone Him because (in their words) “you, being a man, make yourself God.”

John 20:28: Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!”

This had to do with the famous Doubting Thomas incident. Thomas didn't believe Jesus had risen, so Jesus appeared for His sake and told him to touch His wounds. Then Thomas believed and said, “My Lord and my God!” If it were untrue, Jesus would have corrected him, but He didn't; He commended Thomas because he believed.

Colossians 1:19: For in him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell.

In context, it is the Son who is being described (Col. 1:13); He is eternal (Col. 1:15, 17-18), the Creator (Col. 1:16), and the unifying principle of the universe (Col. 1:17; cf. Heb 1:3): all attributes that are true only of God. Paul makes the notion even more explicit in the next chapter:

Colossians 2:9: For in him the whole fulness of deity dwells bodily.

2 Peter 1:1: our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

St. Paul uses the same phrase in Titus 2:13 as well.

Hebrews 1:8: But of the Son he says, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever, the righteous scepter is the scepter of thy kingdom.”

This is a remarkable passage, in which God the Father calls His Son “God.” It is a reference to the Old Testament passage, Psalm 45:6-7.

In Hebrews 1:6, God the Father also says that all the angels should worship God the Son. Worship can be rightly applied only to God, as we know from Exodus 34:14 and Deuteronomy 8:19. Yet Jesus accepted worship of Him on many occasions (e.g., Matt. 14:33; 28:9) and stated that He should be honored equally with the Father (John 5:23). In Revelation 5:8, 12-13 and Colossians 2:6-7, we find that Jesus is worshipped in *every* way that the Bible specifically describes worship of God the Father, with all the same words used (see Rev. 4:9-11; 5:13; 7:11-12; Rom. 11:33).

Jesus is omnipotent (possesses all power):

Philippians 3:20-21: the Lord Jesus Christ, who will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power which enables him even to subject all things to himself.

He’s omniscient (all knowing):

Colossians 2:2-3: Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

He’s omnipresent (present everywhere):

Ephesians 1:22-23: the church, which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all. (cf. Col. 3:11)

Another astonishing passage along these lines is one in which Jesus speaks about historical events described as being done by God the Father in the Old Testament. He casually applies them to Himself (what might be called “the Divine ‘I’ ”):

Matthew 23:34, 37: Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from town to town. . . . O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!

Many attributes that are said to belong only to God are applied to Jesus in Scripture. God the Father said, “[B]esides me there is no savior” (Isa. 43:11; cf. 1 Tim. 4:10). Yet Jesus is called the savior of mankind in passages such as Luke 2:11 and many others.

God the Father stated, “To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear” (Isa. 45:23). The same exact description is also applied to Jesus (Phil. 2:10-11).

The Bible teaches that God is judge (e.g., 1 Sam. 2:10; Ps. 50:6; Eccles. 12:14). But so is Jesus (John 5:22, 27; 9:39; Acts 10:42; 2 Tim. 4:1). Therefore He is God.

God the Father sits on His throne in heaven (1 Kings 22:19; Ps. 11:4; 47:8). Jesus is on the same throne, too (Rev. 7:17; 22:1, 3).

At every turn in the Bible, only one conclusion is possible, to make sense of all these statements, taken together as a whole: Jesus is God the Son. He is the eternal, all-powerful, all-loving, self-existent Creator God.

The Holy Trinity Proven from Scripture

Briefly put, the Holy Trinity is the belief that the one God subsists in Three Persons: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus, who took on flesh in the Incarnation and became man), and God the Holy Spirit. They are all God, with the same divine attributes, yet are in relationship with each other as subject and object.

It is ultimately a deep mystery, because we can't fully comprehend how three can be one. It seems to go against logic. Yet the Bible plainly teaches it, with many and varied proofs, and so we must accept the revealed doctrine in faith, bowing to the fact that God's thoughts are much higher than ours (see Isa. 55:9).

The Trinity is a classic case in which there are few "direct" proofs, but many, many deductive or indirect proofs, which can hardly be dismissed by any person who accepts the inspiration of Holy Scripture, God's revelation.

No single passage states, "The one God exists in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." Yet, for example, we see a verse that strongly suggests the same, with just a little deduction:

Matthew 28:19: Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

If the Bible teaches that God (and only God) has certain characteristics, and proceeds to apply them to three Persons: called the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, then they are all one God (since the Bible teaches there is but one: Deut. 6:4; 32:39; Isa. 43:10; 44:8; 1 Cor. 8:4-6).

In my research, I have found forty passages that mention all three Divine Persons. Here are eight of them (just one-fifth of the number I found):

Isaiah 61:1: The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me. (cf. Isa. 61:2; Jesus applies this to Himself in Luke 4:16-30)

Luke 3:21-22: [W]hen Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form, as a dove, and a voice came from heaven, "Thou art my

beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased.” (cf. Matt. 3:13-17)

John 15:26: But when the Counselor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me. (cf. 14:26)

Acts 2:33: Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this which you see and hear. (cf. Acts 7:55)

Acts 20:28: Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God which he obtained with the blood of his own Son.

Romans 15:30: I appeal to you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf. (cf. Eph. 2:18)

1 Corinthians 6:11: justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God. (cf. 1 Pet. 1:2)

2 Corinthians 13:14: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Is the Holy Spirit directly referred to as God? Yes; here is the best single passage along those lines:

Acts 5:3-4: But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land? . . . You have not lied to men but to God.”

Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit at the same time he lied to God; therefore, the Holy Spirit and God are synonymous — one and the same.

This sort of thing occurs over and over in the Bible: equivalent characteristics in many respects are applied to all three Divine Persons:

1. *Who raised Jesus from the dead?* Well, it was God the Father (Gal. 1:1; 1 Thess. 1:10); it was also Jesus Himself (John 2:19; 10:17-18); and it was the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:11).
2. *Who gave the new covenant?* The Father (Jer. 31:33-34); Jesus (Heb. 8:1-13; 10:29; 12:24; 13:20); the Holy Spirit (Heb. 10:15-17).
3. *Who sanctifies believers?* The Father (1 Thess. 5:23); Jesus (Heb. 13:12); the Holy Spirit (1 Pet. 1:2).

4. *Who is the creator?* The Father (Gen. 1:1; Isa. 44:24; Acts 17:24; Eph. 3:9); Jesus (John 1:3; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:8, 10); the Holy Spirit (Job 33:4).

5. *Who indwells believers?* The Father (1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Cor. 6:16; 1 John 3:24); Jesus (John 6:56; Rom. 8:10; Eph. 3:17); the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-17; Rom. 8:9, 11; 1 Cor. 3:16). The Bible even describes this in terms of different combinations: Father and Son (John 14:23); Father and Holy Spirit (Eph. 2:21-22; 1 John 3:24); Son and Holy Spirit (Gal. 4:6).

What one Person does, the others also do in complete agreement and unity, and the Persons “interpenetrate” each other. Christian theology has 50-cent words for this: *circumincession* (Latin) and *perichoresis* (Greek).

Lots of things are very difficult to understand yet firmly believed; for starters: quantum mechanics, the physics of black holes, the nuclear fusion that occurs in the center of our sun, the “bending” of space and time (Einstein’s relativity). Physical reality has turned out to be very “weird” and unpredictable. Theology is also sometimes striking, and seemingly “odd” and unfathomable. This should not surprise us at all (since God is an extraordinary Being).

Cumulative arguments based on scores of individual indications become very compelling: much as a large rope, consisting of many individual strands woven together is exceedingly strong. Such is the nature of biblical indications for the Holy Trinity. We find them at every turn. No one should be led astray into thinking that the Holy Trinity is not “biblical.” Having seen the many reasonable proofs, we believe in faith.

Is Trinitarianism Demonstrable from Scripture Alone?

I was writing back and forth with a Protestant pastor. He said that, if he spoke on the Trinity in a Catholic environment, the Catholics in attendance would think that Protestants “got” the doctrine of the Trinity from Catholics and not from Scripture alone and that Catholics believe in it solely because the Church teaches it and not because the Bible teaches it. This was my reply:

That’s not how most Catholics I know would think about it at all. We would rejoice in the truths you taught about, knowing that we hold them in common. We would be glad to learn more about a highly important subject. It wouldn’t matter a hill of beans that you were a Protestant, anymore than it matters that William Lane Craig is a Protestant philosopher when he defends the Resurrection or gives his brilliant version of the Cosmological Argument. I love that stuff, and so do most sensible Catholics. We quickly forget that the source may happen to be a Protestant and rejoice in the truth presented.

Only a polemically motivated, overzealous Catholic would think in the way you have described. Now, granted, if there were some big debate about the topic, some of that might come out, but even then, I think you have caricatured the Catholic position.

As an apologist, I have written on this topic, and I would never present it in such terms. It’s far more complex than that. But in a nutshell, I would say: yes, the Trinity can be explicitly proven from many biblical passages (see the previous two chapters). I presuppose that it is clear and undeniable from Scripture alone.

What Catholics actually say about the authority issue with regard to the Trinity is that (much as you would say, I’m sure) human sin and false premises can cause sinful men to distort the Bible and find in it a non-Trinitarian view. We see examples all around us: Jehovah’s Witnesses, Christadelphians, Mormons, and so forth. So an authoritative Church is very useful to declare things dogmatically.

It doesn’t follow from that that the Trinity was *not* clear in the Bible alone without the Church. If you read the Fathers opposing the Arians, you’ll see this dynamic very clearly. They argue for the Bible, but then they end the

argument by appealing to the Church and apostolic tradition.

The first thing is the material element, and the second is the formal. They'll say, "The Church has always taught the Holy Trinity all the way back to the beginning; therefore it is true, because the Church is protected by the Holy Spirit, and the teaching goes back to Jesus and the apostles."

But the Arians had no such history they could produce, so they had to fall back on the Bible alone; but they distorted the Bible with bogus prooftexts that Jesus was supposedly created.

Both things are true: the Trinity is true because the Bible teaches it, and it is true because the Church has always taught it. The second is not "over" the first, as if the first has no validity in and of itself.

We believe exactly the same about the canon of the Bible. The Bible is what it is, independently of the Church's declaring it to be so. The books do not become inspired merely because the Church said so. They are inspired because they are God-breathed. Vatican I and Vatican II both state this.

Nevertheless, it is good to have an authoritative list of canonical books because, in fact, the Fathers disagreed somewhat on those in the early centuries, and an objective statement was necessary to avoid continuing disagreement.

You can always find people who will think illogically and not understand the teaching of the Church they are part of. In the end, you can go only by official Church teachings. But I have not found this particular thing to be the case very often, and I was a committed evangelical for thirteen years and have been a committed Catholic for almost twenty-four, and an apologist in both camps.

Trinitarian Baptismal Formula and “Jesus Only” Baptism

It is often argued by those who deny the Trinity (groups such as the United Pentecostal Church or so-called apostolic denominations, corresponding to their Sabellian or “Oneness” Christology); also by a few Trinitarian denominations that adopt a “Jesus only” baptismal formula, that Acts 2:38 provides us with the correct baptismal formula (i.e., the words pronounced by the person performing the sacrament). Others contend that Acts 2:38 contradicts Matthew 28:19. Some higher critics of the Bible have argued (typical of their “method”) that Matthew 28:19 is a later extrapolation into the biblical text. Here is the text under consideration:

Acts 2:38-39: And Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him.”

The Trinitarian baptismal formula is based on Matthew 28:19; what is called the Great Commission (an express command of Jesus):

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

In the context of Acts 2, the phrase “in the name of Jesus Christ” was not a liturgical formula, but a way of distinguishing Christian baptism from the baptism of John the Baptist (cf. Acts 19:1-5). Matthew 28:19 shows that awareness and acceptance of the Holy Trinity is also necessary. Hence, in context, Peter mentions the Holy Spirit: “Repent, and be baptized . . . and you shall receive the *gift of the Holy Spirit*.” God the Father is included in the next verse as well: “For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one *whom the Lord our God calls to him*.”

Moreover, fairly explicit Trinitarianism is present in Acts 2:32-33, in the same sermon on the Day of Pentecost:

This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being

therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this which you see and hear.

The passage in Acts 2:38 is not intended as a *formula* and doesn't record an actual baptism or the words spoken during it (because Peter is commanding baptism for all Christians, not actually performing it). In any event, to use the phrase "baptized in Jesus' name" (in a nonformulaic way) does not *theologically* contradict the Trinitarian baptismal formula.

The baptismal formula adopted by the Church in her rite and sacrament of baptism from the beginning is the one recorded in Matthew 28:19. We see this in the *Didache*, a very important apostolic writing, dated as early as A.D. 60-70, which places it earlier than even some biblical books. In this work we find the following passage (7:1):

After the foregoing instructions, baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in living [running] water. If you have no living water, then baptize in other water, and if you are not able in cold, then in warm. If you have neither, pour water three times on the head, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Before baptism, let the one baptizing and the one to be baptized fast, as also any others who are able. Command the one who is to be baptized to fast beforehand for one or two days.

Many other Church fathers bear witness to the Trinitarian baptismal formula. In the Bible itself, there are many passages that associate Jesus' name (in some fashion: we are contending that it is a nonformulaic use) with baptism (Acts 8:16; 10:48; 19:1-5; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-4; 1 Cor. 1:13; 6:11; Gal. 3:27).

When Jesus gave the explicit Trinitarian formula of Matthew 28:19, Matthew, Peter, John, and the other disciples (minus Judas) were present, and Luke would surely have learned of that through these sources. We know about that because it is recorded; therefore, it (i.e., the baptismal formula) is definitely part of the apostolic deposit.

The disciples heard this with their own ears, and it had to do with one of the basic rites of the Church. They were not at liberty to change that (nor is the Church). It would have been unthinkable. That was the tradition that they had to preserve and promulgate.

The question, then, is whether the Bible verses above that mention Jesus contradict the Trinitarian formula. They do not. It's not an either-or proposition. Since Peter heard what Jesus taught about the formula to be used, he would not and could not have contradicted it.

“In the name of [the Lord] Jesus Christ” is not a formula but a summation of a different idea: Jesus was the name that was revealed (Phil. 2:9-10; cf. 2 Thess. 1:12; 1 John 3:23), and He was the one whom Christians served. They healed in and by His name (Acts 3:6; 4:10, 30; 16:18), and called upon Him (1 Cor. 1:2). Moreover, Peter is *commanding* baptism for all Christians, not actually *performing* it in Acts 2:38.

Indeed, St. Paul states: “And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Col. 3:17). Paul said he would die “for the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 21:13). Therefore, to use the phrase “baptized in Jesus’ name” (in a nonformulaic way) does not theologically contradict the Trinitarian baptismal formula of Matthew 28:10.

*A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*¹⁹ comments accordingly on Acts 2:38:

To Semites the name is the person. “Baptism in the name” means “to be, by the fact of baptism, consecrated, dedicated, subjected to someone.” . . . Jesus has been shown to be the Messiah. To join his community, to belong to him, his baptism must be received. Thus “baptism in the name of Jesus” is not a liturgical formula, but distinguishes Christian baptism from, e.g., that of John the Baptist, 19:5, or that given to proselytes. Mt 28:19 and St. Paul’s question in 19:3 show that knowledge of the Holy Trinity was necessary, and each Person is mentioned here in 38-39.

A. T. Robertson expresses the same notion:

In the Acts the full name of the Trinity does not occur in baptism as in Matthew 28:19, but this does not show that it was not used. The name of Jesus Christ is the distinctive one in Christian baptism and really involves the Father and the Spirit. . . . “Luke does not give the form of words used in baptism by the Apostles, but merely states the fact that they baptized those who acknowledged Jesus as Messiah or as Lord.”²⁰

If this is part of the reasoning employed by those who think there was a different formula in the very early Church, I think it fails by not bringing into

consideration the above factors regarding how “the name of Jesus” was used and understood by the earliest Christians, in their culturally Jewish context.

¹⁹ Edited by Dom Bernard Orchard (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1953).

²⁰ Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. 2, comment on Acts 2:38.

Should God the Father Be Visually Depicted in Paintings?

As long as it is understood as artistic license, God the Father may be depicted in painting. The Bible teaches that God the Father is an invisible spirit (Col. 1:15; 1 Tim. 1:17), but I think it is permissible to portray the “idea” of God the Father visually, just as the Holy Spirit was portrayed (by God’s design) as a dove at Jesus’ baptism (see Matt. 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:32).

Likewise, God the Father on several occasions in the Old Testament presented Himself visually in the form of the “Angel of the Lord” or in what are known as “theophanies” (see, e.g., Exod. 3:2-6). This being the case, paintings of God the Father, although not literal to His nature, are permissible, since the Bible permits similar representations of the Father and the Holy Spirit (neither of whom has a body or physicality).

Moreover, there is even some biblical basis for visualizing God the Father as the stereotypical old man with white hair. The prophet Daniel saw this in one of his “visions” (Dan. 7:7):

Daniel 7:9: As I looked, thrones were placed and one that was ancient of days took his seat; his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, its wheels were burning fire. (cf. Rev. 1:13-15, which describes Jesus in similar fashion)

The “son of man” (the Messiah or Jesus) appeared before the Father and was given dominion over the kingdom (Dan. 7:13-14). Jesus referred to this passage and “coming on the clouds of heaven” during His trial (Matt. 26:64; cf. Mark 14:62).

Satan's Tempting of Jesus as a Proof of Jesus' Divinity

Matthew 4:1-7: Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And he fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took him to the holy city, and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, 'He will give his angels charge of you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'" (cf. Luke 4:1-13)

In my own opinion, this passage has a double application: primarily to God the Father, but also to Jesus Himself. After all, Matthew 4:1 says He was "tempted by the devil" (cf. Matt. 4:3; Luke 4:2, 13). Matthew 4:7 is a citation of Deuteronomy 6:16. In the context of that passage, the Jews were tempting God to show them a miracle.

So what do we have here? The devil challenged (or tempted) Jesus to turn stones into bread (Matt. 4:3), and referred to Him (cynically and mockingly, but with knowledge) as "the Son of God."

We know from John 5:18 that in the Jewish mind, "son of God" was tantamount to being God ("This was why the Jews sought all the more to kill him, because he not only broke the sabbath but also called God his Father, making himself equal with God."). The Jews even tried to stone Jesus in one instance because He called God His Father (John 10:30-36).

Satan knew who Jesus was. James 2:19 states: "You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe — and shudder" (cf. Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34).

The Church Father Hilary of Poitiers wrote: "Thus beating down the efforts of the Devil, He professes Himself both God and Lord." This was included in

the *Catena Aurea* of St. Thomas Aquinas (a commentary on Matthew that collected patristic commentary). I think it is a legitimate secondary application of the verse. Hilary thought so, too (and St. Thomas quoted him to that effect), and I suspect others could be found if we looked hard enough. Granted, I don't think it's one of the stronger arguments for the divinity of Jesus (of which there are literally hundreds) by a long shot, but it's interesting, plausible, and possible, and it doesn't appear that we can totally rule it out from what we have in the text and in cross-textual considerations.

Jesus' Acceptance of Praise as a Proof of His Divinity

This is, I submit, one of those innumerable proofs of the deity of Christ that are so plain (presented almost in a ho-hum fashion in Scripture, so to speak) that we can easily miss them:

Matthew 21:14-16: And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant; and they said to him, "Do you hear what these are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read, 'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast brought perfect praise'?"

Do you see what is happening here? The "praise" (Jesus' word) is directed toward *Jesus*, but praise of this sort is to be directed only to God; hence, Jesus is God. It is made crystal clear by looking at the Old Testament citation, because what was applied to God the Father there is now applied to Jesus, and He *accepts* it:

Psalm 8:1-3

*O LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is thy name in all the earth!
Thou whose glory above the heavens is chanted
by the mouth of babes and infants . . .
When I look at thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,
the moon and the stars which thou hast established . . .*

Jesus Is Explicitly, Directly Called “God” (Romans 9:5)

KJV: Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

Douay-Rheims: Christ, according to the flesh, who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

NASB: the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

This is the literal rendering of the Greek. Hence, *Young’s Literal Translation* (the most literal in English) translates: “the Christ, according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed to the ages. Amen.”

Other translations bring the meaning out more explicitly:

NKJV: Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God.

Knox: Christ, who rules as God over all things.

NIV: Christ, who is God over all.

Phillips: Christ who is God over all.

Beck: Christ, who is God over everything.

I naturally (with my apologist’s instinct and heartfelt orthodoxy) like these five “explicit” renderings, yet the text is slightly ambiguous, so this is not an “airtight” passage. Yet at least five translations, including one Catholic one (Knox), present this passage as an explicit proof for the divinity of Jesus, or His being directly called or addressed as “God.”

This occurrence is infrequent, in any event (John 20:28; Titus 2:13; and 2 Pet. 1:1 being probably the three best instances), and often denied altogether as present in the Bible, by detractors of Trinitarian Christianity and Christology and by folks who just don’t know their Bibles very well (sadly, legion).

Jesus' Agony in the Garden vs. "Be Not Anxious"

Matthew 26:37-38: And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me."

Mark 14:33-34: And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch."

Jesus' emotions in the garden are described with the Greek words *lupeo* (sorrowful [Strong's word no. 3076]) in Matthew 26:37; and *perilupos* (exceedingly sorrowful [Strong's word no. 4036]) in Matthew 26:38 and Mark 14:34. These are neutral terms insofar as the question of sin or right and wrong are concerned. Sorrow and sadness are not sins. Jesus wept over the death of Lazarus. This is not a sin; it is being human and compassionate, and Jesus had a human nature as well as a divine nature.

Jesus' instruction to "be not anxious," on the other hand, uses a different word: *merimnao* (Strong's word no. 3309). This had to do with anxiety, worry, fear about what the future held in store. Jesus told His followers not to be anxious in, for example, the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:34). It's not a case, then, of Jesus telling us not to do something, and then doing it Himself.

A similar question arises (in some skeptical minds) regarding Mary and Joseph looking for Jesus when He was twelve and not being able to find Him for a time:

Luke 2:48: And when they saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously."

It comes down, again, entirely not only to definitions of words but context. Mary and Joseph were simply concerned about the welfare of their son, which is not a sin. All parents do that. The word for "anxiously" in the RSV here is a different one: *odunao* (Strong's word no. 3600). The same word

(“sorrowing” in the RSV) is used when Paul’s followers say farewell to him (Acts 20:37-38). No sin at all.

Even *merimnao* is not *absolutely* prohibited. Paul uses it in the sense of “caring for” (1 Cor. 7:32-34), and quite positively, in 1 Corinthians 12:25 and Philippians 2:19-20. He used the cognate *merimna* in 2 Corinthians 11:28: “anxiety for all the churches.”

Jesus was urging His followers not to worry or get anxious about what what might be. That shows a lack of trust and faith. But Jesus had no *doubts* in the garden; He simply agonized over the suffering He was willingly to undergo.

Would we really expect Him to feel *otherwise*? If He didn’t suffer in some sense, He wouldn’t have a human nature, as He does. This is one reason we love Him so much: He is like us in almost all respects except for sin. The Bible states repeatedly (including several instances of Jesus’ own words) that Jesus suffered (Matt. 16:21; 17:12; Mark 8:31; 9:12; Luke 9:22; 17:25; 22:15; 24:26, 46; Acts 3:18; 17:3; 26:23; Rom. 8:17; 2 Cor. 1:5; Phil. 3:10; Heb. 2:9-10, 18; 5:8; 9:26; 13:12; 1 Pet. 1:11; 2:21, 23; 4:1, 13; 5:1).

There is no trace in Scripture of attributing sin to Jesus. He can agonize in His human nature; that is no difficulty whatever. It is a result of the Incarnation and what He came to earth to do on our behalf.

Annulment Is Not Catholic Divorce

A widespread perception exists, among Protestants, secular society, our Orthodox brethren, and even too many Catholics that annulment is simply a sophisticated, “playing with words” equivalent of divorce. This is untrue. The distinction between divorce and annulment is one that is routinely made even in civil law. It is not unique to, nor was it invented by, Catholicism.

For example, the *Oxford Companion to Law* states that “Annulment of a marriage is legislative or judicial invalidation of it, as in law never having existed, as distinct from dissolution [divorce], which terminates a valid marriage.”²¹

In a considerable number of scenarios, the Church recognizes that a legitimate, sacramental marriage was never present from the outset. One has to enter into marriage with a free will and full understanding of what it entails. The proverbial shotgun wedding is a classic case in which the free will of at least one party is abrogated. A person might, for example, marry someone who did not reveal that he was a practicing criminal, or someone with an unknown severe mental illness, or someone who, say (to use an extreme example for the sake of illustration), turns out to be a spy from a hostile government, or one who is already married (bigamy). All of these scenarios (and many others) are illegitimate “marriages” and nonsacramental from the start.

It’s often noted that much higher rates of annulment occur today. Abuses in the process do, no doubt, take place, due to societal and peer pressure and sin and human weakness. But the prevalence of abuse (I’ve learned, from talking to canon lawyers) is likely far less than is often casually assumed.

It’s also indisputable that more and more people have a limited understanding from the outset of what a sacramental marriage is and what it entails; hence, such “marriages” were never *sacramentally* valid in the first place. This lack of knowledge would be an altogether valid reason and explanation for greater numbers of annulments than were formerly seen. Our society’s view of marriage is much weaker than in the past, with many couples having such a low view of it that they don’t even seek marriage.

The Old Testament distinction between a concubine and a wife is somewhat analogous to ours between a civil and sacramental marriage — itself the foundational premise of the concept of annulment. Concubines were distinguished from wives, even multiple ones (Judges 8:30-31). God approved of sending away Hagar and her son Ishmael (Gen. 21:12), not because they were evil or disparaged by Him (see Gen. 17:20; 21:13, 17-20), but because Sarah was Abraham's wife in the full sense (akin to sacramental marriage).

Likewise, in Ezra 10:1-19, 44 (cf. Ezra 9:1-2, 14-15), many Israelites “put away” (Ezra 10:19) the “foreign women” they had married, not simply because they were foreigners, but because they caused them to become corrupted by false religions and idolatry (see, e.g., Deut. 17:17; Neh. 13:23-28). This was essentially an annulment, as opposed to a divorce, because these unions had a serious impediment in the eyes of God and in light of His laws. They were not in accord with what God had commanded.

If one is looking for New Testament verification of the notion of annulment, the “except for unchastity” clause of Matthew 19:9 is interpreted by Catholic commentators (and the Church fathers en masse) as a case of nonmatrimonial cohabitation as opposed to real marriage. In other words, Jesus was saying that if someone divorces his wife, he commits adultery, except in cases where he actually was *not* married in the first place. That is an annulment: straight from our Lord.

Oddly, many commentators (and individual Christians) seem to think that “unchastity” in Matthew 19:9 refers to the *adultery* of one of the marriage partners (thus allowing a permissible divorce). But the Greek word here (*porneia*) is rarely if ever translated “adultery” in the passage. The usual Greek word for “adultery” is *moicheia*.

Porneia and related cognates are *never* translated in the King James Version, for example, as “adultery,” but always as “fornication” or other such terms. We also see the two Greek words distinguished from each other in the same verse (Matt. 5:19; Mark 7:21; Gal. 5:19). All of this supports the traditional and dogmatic Catholic understanding that Jesus was referring in Matthew 19:9 to something other than an adulterous affair of a truly married person.

Moreover, the “Pauline privilege” has always been accepted by the Church:

1 Corinthians 7:15: But if the unbelieving partner desires to separate, let it be so; in such a case the brother or sister is not bound. For God has called us to peace.

The Church has held that a Christian is free to remarry in cases where two nonbelievers (generally unbaptized) marry, one later becomes a Christian, and the non-Christian departs. This is because the natural (or what we often call “civil”) marriage was not sacramental in the first place.

Hence, St. Ambrose wrote in A.D. 385 in his letter 19:7 to Vigilus: “Since the marriage ceremony ought to be sanctified by the priestly veiling and blessing, how can that be called a marriage ceremony where there is no agreement in faith?”

Likewise, Pope St. Leo the Great, writing in 459 to Rusticus (Epistle 167:4), stated, in reference to Abraham and Hagar:

Since the marriage tie was from the beginning so constituted as apart from the joining of the sexes to symbolize the mystic union of Christ and His Church, it is undoubted that that woman has no part in matrimony, in whose case it is shown that the mystery of marriage has not taken place.

In summary, then, annulments are recognized in civil law and have an explicit exegetical basis. Catholics need not fear close examination, nor be “ashamed” of the issue.

²¹ *Oxford Companion to Law*, ed. D. M. Walker (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1980), s.v. “Annulment.”

“Be Fruitful and Multiply”

Some things are so obvious that we take them for granted. We don’t feel that we need to “argue” them because we casually assume that everyone knows they are true. The lyrics to an old Frank Sinatra song come to my mind: “Love and marriage go together like a horse and carriage.”

But wait! This seeming commonsense “truism” has been largely lost, in terms of being the norm in our society. Today love and marriage *don’t* always go together, and we see thousands of couples living together without being married. And, of course, now even marriage as solely between a man and a woman is up for question.

Marriage and procreation is another such obvious pairing that is increasingly denied today. What once was understood by virtually everyone (certainly all Christians) no longer is, and is rejected outright by more and more couples.

So we Catholics and other conscientious parents concerned with educating children in traditional morality need to go back to the basics and cite inspired Holy Scripture to reinforce basic moral truths — sort of like learning our ABCs all over again.

The Bible is quite clear on this point, and — as in many cases, including even the very existence of God — *assumes* its truth, so much so, that it doesn’t bother to explain *why* it’s true. In fact, the very *first* command to man recorded in the Bible is “Be fruitful and multiply” (Gen. 1:28).

We might also note (taking into account common complaints and misunderstandings about Catholic teaching) that what the Church calls the *unitive* purpose of marriage is also alluded to early on in Genesis, where God says: “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him” (Gen. 2:18). Marriage is not *only* for procreation; nor does it consist only of pleasure and companionship, but *both*. Yet procreation is the fundamental purpose and essence of marriage (and the relations within it). The notion of fruitfulness and multiplying is repeatedly presented as a blessing in the Bible (Gen. 9:1, 7; 35:11; Ps. 107:38; Isa. 48:18-19; Jer. 29:6;

30:19-20; 33:22; Ezek. 36:10-12; Dan. 3:35-36; Bar. 2:34). The ultimate cause of this increasing is *God*, not man and his choices, although man indeed “works together” with God, always enabled by His grace (cf. 1 Cor. 3:9-10; 15:10; 2 Cor. 6:1; Phil. 2:13):

Genesis 28:3: *God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you.*

Deuteronomy 7:13-14: *[H]e will love you, bless you, and multiply you; he will also bless the fruit of your body and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your wine and your oil, the increase of your cattle and the young of your flock, in the land which he swore to your fathers to give you. You shall be blessed above all peoples; there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle.*

Psalms 105:24: *And the LORD made his people very fruitful, and made them stronger than their foes. (cf. Ps. 115:14)*

This is the natural order of things. We’ve come from that to a strange place where three or more children are considered too many. My wife and I ran into two nice ladies at our local Highland Games, and we mentioned that we had four children. One of them immediately shot back with, “Oh, you must be *Catholic*.” I didn’t think fast enough at the time. Instead of smiling sheepishly and saying, “Yeah,” I should have replied, “We have four children because we’re *married*.” That would have been much more interesting and could quite possibly have led to a fruitful discussion (no pun intended).

It’s too bad that we don’t also have a popular song with the line: “Lots o’ kids and marriage: go together like a horse and carriage,” but no doubt that would be scorned just as the coupling of “love and marriage” or “husband and wife” is.

The world is turned upside down: in the wrong direction. The ugly fruit of secularism is apparent. Thus, our task is to present traditional moral teaching to our children and anyone else, when the topic comes up, and to explain why we believe as we do: to defend what used to be patently obvious to one and all.

God Blesses Parents with Children

We can learn a lot from words, especially if we go back to the Latin roots of many of our English words. All Christians are familiar with the notion of God as the Creator. He made all things from nothing (theologians describe this with the wonderful Latin phrase *creatio ex nihilo*).

The word *procreate* has an obvious linguistic and conceptual connection with creation. Mothers and fathers don't create their children all by themselves but are vessels used by God, who has brought all the wonderful processes of reproduction into being. Parents participate in the unspeakable privilege of the creation of a new child and work together with God, as so often in Scripture. Yet the child's soul is a supernatural creation from God and has nothing to do with biology.

The problem today, in our massively contraceptive culture, is that we have forgotten that God is Creator and the primary participant and ultimate cause in procreation as well: the bearing of children, as a function of His providence, whereby He has a hand in all things, for His eternal purposes; all things working together for good (Rom. 8:28), for those who love Him.

Somehow we fallen persons too often think it is all *our* doing when a child is conceived, and nothing of God's — as if natural processes were all that is involved in children's being conceived and born. We're trained by our secular culture to think in terms of both individual control and the primacy of nature, over against supernature, or grace (insofar as the latter is acknowledged at all).

The Bible takes a far different view, and the phrase "opened her womb" is used in reference to God with regard to both Leah (Gen. 29:31) and Rachel (Gen. 30:22). It's not just a trite observation on the level, say, of a popular greeting card. It's a profound truth. Real cause and effect is in play. Other passages teach the same thing:

Joshua 24:3-4: Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan, and made his offspring many. I gave him Isaac; and to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau.

Ruth 4:13: So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife . . . and the LORD gave her conception, and she bore a son.

Moreover, Scripture describes God as the primary Creator throughout the process of conception and childbirth: “Thy hands fashioned and made me” (Job 10:8); “Thou didst clothe me with skin and flesh, and knit me together with bones and sinews” (Job 10:11); “In his hand is the life of every living thing” (Job 12:10); “[D]id not one fashion us in the womb?” (Job 31:15); [T]he LORD who made you, who formed you from the womb” (Isa. 44:2; cf. Isa. 44:24).

Granted, the parents and natural processes are also causes. But we mustn’t *remove God from the equation*, or in effect, tie His hands when He would will that a child be born, and we overrule Him, so to speak. This is the evil in contraception, or what is known as the “contralife will.” When we are open to life, we freely work together with God, His will, and His providence in our lives, for our good and that of our children.

It doesn’t follow that every Catholic couple *must* have a dozen children or as many as is humanly possible. The Church allows spacing of children (by means of Natural Family Planning [NFP], not contraception) and limiting of children in circumstances that warrant it (health or financial reasons). What is *not* allowed is the deliberate separation of the procreative function of marriage from the unitive (pleasurable) function, so that the latter is sought without the intrinsic connection to the former.

God knew what that separation would bring about in society, and we see the sad, tragic fruit of this dangerous point of view all around us. Our task is not just to live out the Catholic life ethic consistently, but also to understand the positive (not merely “negative”) underlying reasons for it, and to share them with others.

The many biblical passages about children (especially, *many* of them) being a great blessing suggest procreation as the central purpose of marriage (certainly the very opposite of a contraceptive outlook):

Genesis 17:16: I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.

Genesis 33:5: The children whom God has graciously given your servant.

1 Chronicles 25:5: All these were the sons of Heman the king’s seer,

according to the promise of God to exalt him; for God had given Heman fourteen sons and three daughters.

Psalm 127:3-5: Lo, sons are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the sons of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them!

We ignore God's inspired Word and the godly counsel of Holy Mother Church at our peril. The God who created us knows what will make us joyful, fulfilled, and at peace, as His disciples. God the Father knows best!

Onan's Sin and Punishment

The constant tradition of the Catholic Church has been to prohibit artificial contraception. In this the Catholic Church seems to be almost alone today. Yet, historically speaking, all Christian groups opposed contraception altogether until the Anglicans decided in 1930 to allow it for “hard cases” (how sadly *familiar* that reasoning sounds!).

It's often thought that the Catholic reasoning behind the prohibition stems from a sort of “anti-sex” or “anti-pleasure” or prudish motivation. The Catholic Church supposedly doesn't “like” sex, so she requires priests and nuns to be celibate and seeks to take as much pleasure as possible out of the wondrous divine gift of sexuality. This is untrue, but suffice it for now to say that the relevant biblical arguments have been used by Protestants as well, and stand on their own.

This scriptural basis is perhaps seen most clearly in the passage concerning the sin of Onan:

Genesis 38:9-10: [W]hen he went in to his brother's wife he spilled the semen on the ground, lest he should give offspring to his brother. And what he did was displeasing in the sight of the LORD, and he slew him also.

The reasoning often used to overcome the force of the passage is to say that Onan was punished by God (with death) for disobeying the “levirate law,” whereby a brother of a dead husband was to take his sister-in-law as his wife and have children with her (Deut. 25:5-10). But that can't apply in this case (or any other) because the law allows the brother to refuse and recommends that the one who does so suffer only public humiliation. Thus we find in Deuteronomy 25:9 that a sister-in-law so refused should “spit in his face,” but there is no mention of any wrath from God, let alone the death penalty.

Moreover, the passage that teaches about the levirate law (Deut. 25:5-10) is directly from God, as part of the covenant and the Law received by Moses on Mount Sinai and proclaimed to all of Israel (see Deut. 5:1-5; 29:1, 12). God Himself did *not* say that the punishment for disobeying the levirate law was

death (in the place where it would be expected if it were true).

If refusal alone was not grounds to be killed by God or by capital punishment issued by his fellows, there must have been something in the way Onan refused that was the cause. This was the “withdrawal method,” a form of contraception (probably the one most used throughout history, because it requires no devices or potions). Therefore, Onan was killed for doing that, which means (we can reasonably conclude) that God didn’t approve of it.

The levirate law itself confirms the central point on which the moral objection to contraception is based: the evil of separating sex from procreation. It is precisely because the primary purpose of marriage is procreation that the levirate law was present in the first place. If one married, they were to have sexual relations, which was (foremost) for the purpose of having children.

If a husband died with no children, it was so important to continue his name with offspring that God commanded the man’s brother to take his wife after he died. But Onan tried to separate sex from procreation. He wanted all the pleasure but not the responsibility of perpetuating his brother’s family. He possessed the “contraceptive mentality” that is rampant today, even (sadly) among otherwise traditional, committed Christians.

Fr. Brian Harrison wrote an excellent article in which he examined the passage in great exegetical depth, with incorporation of pertinent cross-texting. He states:

As is well-known, Scripture always refers to licit (married) intercourse only in an oblique way: “going in to” one’s wife, (i.e., entering her tent or bedchamber, cf. vv. 8 and 9 in the Genesis text cited above, as well as Gen. 6:4; II Sam. 16:22; I Chron. 23:7) or “knowing” one’s spouse (e.g., Gen. 4:17; Luke 1:34). When the language becomes somewhat more explicit — “lying with” someone, or “uncovering [his/her] nakedness” — the reference is without exception to sinful, shameful sexual acts. And apart from the verse we are considering, the Bible’s only fully explicit mention of a genital act (the voluntary emission of seed) is in a prophetic and allegorical context wherein Israel’s infidelity to Yahweh is being denounced scathingly in terms of the shameless lust of a harlot (Ez. 23:20).²²

The evil of the contraceptive act stems from its willful, unnatural separation of what God intended to be together. It violates natural law. Onan

tried the “middle way” (and the “modern way”) of having sex but willfully separating procreation from it. This was the sin, and it’s why God killed him.

Obviously, God is not immediately punishing or judging in this fashion today (or if so, only in the very rarest of cases), but the point of the Old Testament was to make clear what was right and wrong, and to punish evil swiftly and decisively. Therefore, we learn from this passage that contraception is quite gravely sinful and forbidden; and this general principle of morality didn’t change with the arrival of the new covenant and Christianity.

²² Brian W. Harrison, “The Sin of Onan Revisited,” *Living Tradition*, no. 67, November 1996, <http://www.rtforum.org/lt/lt67.html>.

Reply to an Attack against NFP and Spacing of Children

A “traditionalist” argued the following things (all false, and number 4 is a distortion and contrary to fact):

1. Women must be open to having an unlimited number of children.
2. Married couples cannot decide to limit this number for any reason.
3. Married couples cannot decide to space children for any reason.
4. Bl. Pope Paul VI made a “drastic change” in Catholic tradition by making the purpose of marriage happiness of the couple rather than procreation.
5. Bl. Pope Paul VI’s reasons given in [the 1968 encyclical] *Humanae Vitae* for limiting and spacing children are wrong and come from “Protestant” reasoning: against Catholic tradition.
6. Natural Family Planning (NFP) is no different from artificial contraception and is, therefore, evil. It is a corruption of traditional teaching, not a development of it.

Following is my reply to all these serious errors and distortions of what the Church teaches and has taught:

Humanae Vitae is infallible teaching, and NFP is a legitimate, consistent development of the ban on contraception. Spacing children for the right reasons is perfectly acceptable and Catholic. The unitive function of marriage has always been part of it. To deny that is to feed into stereotypes that Catholics are antisex and antipleasure and that all that women are good for is to be baby-making machines.

Similar thinking of this sort leads to genital mutilation of women (or “female circumcision”), which still occurs today in many cultures. Women are not supposed to have any pleasure in sex, right (which would be shocking news to the writer of the Song of Solomon)?

Spacing can be done for health, financial, or emotional reasons (as *Humanae Vitae* discusses). Bl. Pope Paul VI wrote:

In relation to physical, economic, psychological, and social conditions, responsible parenthood is exercised, either by the deliberate and generous decision to raise a numerous family, or by the decision, made for grave motives and with due respect for the moral law, to avoid for the time being, or even for an indeterminate period, a new birth. (section 10)

Take my family's case, for example (to see how this works out in a real-life scenario). God has blessed my wife and me with four wonderful children. We did practice NFP. Why? Well, we have never had much money (given that I am an apologist, a profession that is not thought much of), and that is a legitimate consideration (having fifteen children and a fairly low income is not a wise life choice).

But there were also serious health reasons. My wife, Judy, has had six miscarriages, and very difficult pregnancies (the last one required several months of bed rest).

Moreover, there were emotional difficulties, with *extremely* serious postpartum depression after our second child (who had colic for a good year, so that her sleep was severely disrupted, and I couldn't help much since my wife nursed the children and I had a driving job and so couldn't be up all night either).

These are all perfectly legitimate reasons to exercise NFP. And it's no different in essence from the following biblical passage:

1 Corinthians 7:4-5: For the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does. Do not refuse one another except perhaps by agreement for a season, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, lest Satan tempt you through lack of self-control.

NFP is, in effect, one such "season." The couple abstains during fertile periods, for good and permissible reasons (assuming these are present, in good conscience; NFP is also itself abused if used wrongly for illegitimate motives). This is fundamentally different from contraception, because the couple who practices NFP accepts the natural order of things and natural law by not having sex during fertile periods.

Contraception eliminates the possibility of conception (during fertile periods), thus violating God's law, by not willing a child who might be, if

sexual relations occur. In other words, it is immoral to engage in sexual relations when a woman is fertile and deliberately thwart what might be a conception. That is not being open to life. NFP involves no such contralife will, because it counsels abstinence during fertile periods (for the right reasons).

To understand these issues better, I highly recommend *The Teaching of “Humanae Vitae”: A Defense*, by John C. Ford, S.J., Germain Grisez, Joseph Boyle, John Finnis, and William E. May. In the chapter “Every Marital Act Ought to Be Open to New Life: Toward a Clearer Understanding,” the authors say:

There is a real and very important difference between not wanting to have a baby, which is common to both [1. contraception] and [2. the noncontraceptive use of NFP], and not wanting the baby one might have, which is true of (1) but not of (2).²³

²³ John C. Ford, S.J., Germain Grisez, Joseph Boyle, John Finnis, and William E. May, *The Teaching of “Humanae Vitae”: A Defense* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 89.

Contraception, Murder, and the Contralife Will

1. One can murder a person after he is conceived.
2. One can deliberately prevent any chance of a person being conceived, through contraceptive means or mentality, or both.

Both statements are contralife or anti-life. Obviously, the second isn't technically murder, but it accomplishes the same goal: it is against the person that may be conceived if intercourse were not divorced from its deepest, procreative purpose:

1. Contraception is a deliberate act of preventing the conception of Person X who would have been conceived had the couple been open to new life.
2. Therefore, the goal or intention is to obliterate the (earthly) existence of Person X.
3. That is also the goal of a murder: to obliterate the (earthly) existence of Person X.
4. Therefore, in the deepest sense, contraception and murder are alike, and evil.
5. Contraception, however, takes it a step further and disallows even the *beginning* of Person X, who might have been or would have been conceived, *were it not* for contraception.
6. Thus, contraception obliterates not only the earthly existence of Person X but any existence whatsoever of the person, in terms of having an eternal soul.
7. In that sense, contraception is even more anti-life than murder is.
8. Therefore, in a qualified, specific sense, contraception can almost be said to be as heinous and wicked as (and philosophically equal to) murder.

Number 6 is mainly looking back (analogically) to murder, which obliterates a person's earthly existence. Contraception goes beyond that insofar as it denies even a soul or a spiritual existence to a person who might

have been. It goes beyond the body to the soul.

It *does* make sense to talk of potential persons, based on God's omniscience, and middle knowledge, as part of that omniscience. God knows what might have been, in all possible situations: things that would have happened, given different variables, as results of actual events. This is not mere speculation. For those who accept the inspiration of Scripture, it's demonstrated:

Matthew 11:21: "Woe to you, Chorazin! woe to you, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes."

Note that God has certain knowledge of what the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon *would* have done, had conditions been different (if they had seen the works of Jesus and heard His message). God knew that. Yet it was not an actual event; only a potential or conditional one.

Here's another:

1 Corinthians 2:7-8: But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification. None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, *they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*

And a third:

Jeremiah 23:21-22: "I did not send the prophets, yet they ran; I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my council, then they would have proclaimed my words to my people, and they would have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings."

Now, with this in mind, let's look at what happens in contraception and its relation to potential or possible persons who never do actually exist:

1. A couple engages in lovemaking, using contraception (for the sake of argument and simplicity, let's assume it is 100 percent effective in preventing conception).
2. Had they not done so, there would have been some chance (depending on fertility and the right conditions) for a person to be conceived. We shall call such potential persons X, Y, and Z.
3. X, Y, and Z might have actually existed, had they not been prevented

from coming into existence by a contralife will that wishes to separate the deepest purpose of sexuality (procreation) from sexual acts.

4. God in His perfect will may very well have intended that a person be brought into existence by a particular sexual act. But the contracepting couple have made that perfect will of God impossible by contraception. They want to separate the act from its deepest and most beautiful meaning.

Another way of putting it is this:

1. X, Y, and Z are those persons who would have *actually* come into existence had contraception been absent during lovemaking (so many times, by so many people). Because of contraception, they do *not* exist.
2. Therefore, X, Y, and Z have been prevented from having an existence at all — even in terms of having a soul — by contraception. And this is contralife.
3. God actually *knows* who these persons would have been; what their lives would have been like. And He would have had a plan and a vocation for each of them. We know He knows this because of His middle knowledge (*scientia media*), as shown in Matthew 11:21 and two other passages.
4. Moreover, we know it from Jeremiah 1:5:

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.

5. God knew this about an actual person, Jeremiah. But He would also know it about potential persons, on the same basis that He knew what the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon would have done, under different conditions.

Abstinence from sex is not contralife. No contralife will or act occurs by simply abstaining, nor by, for example, having sex during infertile periods or after menopause or in the case of a person being infertile through no deliberate intention of his own. None of that is contralife, nor is mere spacing of children, provided that natural law is upheld, and the couple abstains during fertile periods.

The contralife will lies in not being open to a possible conception: to new life, as a result of the sexual act. It's contralife and evil to prevent deliberately

any life from being conceived, while simultaneously enjoying the pleasure of sexuality. This is what is perverse and against natural law.

And it is easily shown to be so by analogy. Suppose we have a person who eats only for pleasure and not for nutrition at all. He wants to eat Butterfinger bars and donuts all day long, and for dessert it's lemon meringue pie and cotton candy. You get the point. Now what do we instinctively think of such a person? We think he is a *nut*, that he is unbalanced, acting like a spoiled and very immature child. And why is that? Because we know that food is not just for pleasure; it is primarily for nutrition.

The same could be said (in a little different way) about the folks in the old Roman vomitoria. For them, food was for pleasure, only to be regurgitated up after being devoured and enjoyed. Likewise, anorexia and bulimia are seen as abnormal and psychologically disordered.

God gave us taste buds, too, but the two things must be kept in balance. So we think a person is weird if he cares only about the taste of food and not at all about its nutritional value.

And we think the same of the extreme health food nut who seems to separate all pleasure from food and eats bark and grubs and other such goodies, because they have a high protein or fiber content. We think that person is as odd as the junk-food junkie.

Yet in secular society and among Christians who have bought secularism and bought into the sexual revolution to some extent, sexuality that separates procreation from the pleasure of sexuality is not viewed as abnormal or disordered at all. That's just, well, personal freedom and the "right" to engage in unlimited pleasurable activity.

Perhaps someone can explain to me why sexuality is viewed that way, while eating food is not.

Does the Bible Condemn Homosexual Acts?

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY²⁴

The Catholic Church is wrong to condemn homosexuality, because homosexuality is natural.

No church has any right to tell people what to do with their own bodies.

Initial reply

The Bible clearly condemns homosexual acts as intrinsically, gravely sinful. Desperate attempts to explain away this prohibition are futile; the Bible is too clear.

Extensive reply

For those who believe that the Bible is God's inspired word, this issue is easily resolved. Catholics and other Christians didn't make this rule; God did. But if one denies that the Bible is inspired, then, of course, none of the following proof texts will matter:

Leviticus 20:13: If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death, their blood is upon them. (cf. Lev. 18:22)

Judges 19:22-23: [B]ehold, the men of the city, base fellows, beset the house round about, beating on the door; and they said to the old man, the master of the house, "Bring out the man who came into your house, that we may know him." And the man, the master of the house, went out to them and said to them, "No, my brethren, do not act so wickedly; seeing that this man has come into my house, do not do this vile thing."

1 Kings 14:24: [A]nd there were also male cult prostitutes in the land. They did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD drove out before the people of Israel. (cf. 1 Kings 15:12; 22:46; Deut. 23:17; 2 Kings 23:7)

1 Timothy 1:8-11: Now we know that the law is good, if any one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the

unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, immoral persons, sodomites, kidnapers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, in accordance with the glorious gospel of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.

Jude 7: [J]ust as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise acted immorally and indulged in unnatural lust, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire. (cf. Gen. 19:4-7 and 2 Pet. 2:4-10; the latter describes the behavior of the Sodomites as not merely violent rape but “licentiousness of the wicked” and “lust of defiling passion”)

Objection

What is condemned in the Bible is selfish, abusive sex (of any kind), not homosexuality per se, which is simply a natural desire of some people. We know much more now about genes and psychology than they did in biblical times.

Reply to Objection

God doesn't change. If He states that something is sinful and never permissible, that prohibition applies at all times. Secondly, it isn't true that the Bible condemns only homosexual rape and not such acts by mutual consent. All the passages above, except Judges 19:22-23 and 1 Timothy 1:8-11 condemn consensual homosexual acts. Jude 7 mentions “unnatural lust” and 2 Peter 2:4-10 states similarly. Therefore, this objection collapses. As for the desire itself, Catholics don't believe it is inherently sinful, as long as it isn't acted upon (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 2358-2359), just as heterosexual lust, fornication, and adultery must be rejected in the will, by God's grace, in order to avoid sin. Everyone has more than enough temptations to resist and overcome.

St. Paul in Romans 1 makes an explicit argument against homosexuality, as an unnatural practice; he also presents a similar argument in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, by stating that excessive appetite for sex (and also food?) amounts to being “enslaved” (1 Cor. 6:12). There is a created reality and natural order beyond mere physical pleasure, which must not be violated. Certain things are wrong by their very nature. Sex outside of marriage — whether heterosexual or homosexual — belongs to that category (1 Cor. 6:18-20). Again, he casually assumes that sodomy is intrinsically wrong in 1 Timothy 1:8-11.

The disciples were not told why (in terms of efficient cause) the man was born blind (Jn. 9:1-3): only the final cause, that the works of God should be made manifest in him. This suggests that in homosexuality, as in every other tribulation, those works can be made manifest: i.e., that every disability conceals a vocation. . . . The homosexual has to accept sexual abstinence just as the poor man has to forego otherwise lawful pleasures because he would be unjust to his wife and children if he took them.²⁵

²⁴ This chapter is also written in the format of my book *The One-Minute Apologist*.

²⁵ C. S. Lewis, letter of May 14, 1954, in Sheldon Vanauken, *A Severe Mercy* (New York: Bantam Books, 1979), 146, abbreviations removed.

St. Paul's Argument from Nature against Homosexual Acts

Romans 1:26-27: For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural, and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error.

St. Paul mentions “dishonorable passions.” He then gives an example of what he calls “dishonorable”: “Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural.” Paul is saying, then, that there is such a thing as “natural [sexual] relations” and its contrary, “unnatural” sexual relations. This brings it down to the matter of natural law and God’s created order, and all that that entails. Some things are natural, some are not. So far, I have merely followed the syntactical and grammatical logic of the passage (at least in its translation). I don’t think anything I have stated thus far could be argued differently, regardless of one’s stance on homosexuality.

What follows in the next verse is clearly related to what came before it: “and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another.” This is very clear-cut. The word *likewise* inescapably implies that the men, too, have abandoned “natural relations” for “unnatural” ones (since it is an analogy). In other words, the contrast is between natural and unnatural, and also between heterosexual and homosexual sex. Paul is not merely saying that the “dishonorable passions” are what is sinful, but rather the very *concept* and *practice* of homosexual relations, which goes against nature.

Since it is “unnatural” for men to be (sexually) with men, and women with women, according to the apostle (and God, since the Bible is God-breathed), Paul describes the sexual acts as “shameless” and in “error.” There is no qualification here for things such as rape or promiscuity or uncommitted, manipulative sex (the frequent desperate eisegesis of those who already believe the Bible is neutral on the issue). St. Paul makes an argument from nature. He is saying that the very notion of homosexuality is disordered and

unnatural.

Romans 1:18-32 is a sort of primitive teleological argument (or argument from design). Paul implies sins against nature in Romans 1:24: “the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves.” Idolatry is condemned in Romans 1:25: “they . . . worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator . . .”

Immoral sex of any sort (heterosexual or homosexual) amounts to a worship of the physical body as an object apart from the whole person who possesses it, and in defiance of the lifelong commitment within which moral sex is protected and placed in the proper context of whole love relationships with whole people (not just genitals), for a whole lifetime.

As mentioned in the last chapter, St. Paul makes a similar argument from nature (but a bit more sophisticated and theological) in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, by stating that excessive appetite for sex amounts to being “enslaved” (6:12). He exclaims:

1 Corinthians 6:16: Do you not know that he who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, “The two shall become one flesh.”

In other words, there is an ontological, created reality and natural order beyond mere physical pleasure, which must not be violated. Certain things are wrong by their very nature. Sex outside of marriage (either heterosexual or homosexual) belongs in that category. Paul continues:

1 Corinthians 6:18-20: Shun immorality. Every other sin which a man commits is outside the body; but the immoral man sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Heterosexual fornication and adultery are just as sinful, wicked, reprehensible, and unnatural as homosexual sex. These sexual sins violate the bounds of proper sex between males and females as God intended it, within a lifelong monogamous commitment of marriage. The same physical act that is right and proper and beautiful in one situation (in marriage) becomes sinful in another (with a prostitute or with someone other than one’s spouse).

Homosexuality also violates this boundary, but it goes a step further and violates the created order of sex itself, which God intended for male and

female (this is self-evident in the complementary physiology of the reproductive organs, and in the result of conception).

One might say that fornication is an “ontological” sin against the moral “concept” of marriage, while homosexual sex sins both against the purpose of sex and the ontological, metaphysical, and spiritual (even physical) nature of sex itself. God’s laws and natural law are spurned and scorned.

On the other hand, Paul seems to teach that *all* forms of sexual immorality are a sin against nature and against the Holy Spirit within us. Something bad actually happens in the very real spiritual realm. We become joined with the harlot. We sin against ourselves and our own bodies as well. We violate the temple of God (ourselves, if we are Christians, since the Holy Spirit dwells in us).

I don’t see how this could be any clearer than it is. The assertion by radical homosexual exegetes that traditional Christians are distorting the Bible’s teaching (whether it is inspired and preserved properly or not) and not presenting it properly is groundless. The Bible, as it reads, is indisputably opposed to homosexual acts as a sin against nature, God, and one’s own body. It’s all right there in Romans 1:26-27.

The Prohibition against Premarital Sex

The prohibition against premarital sex is not at all obscure in the Bible. For example, the standard reference work, *Vine's Expository Dictionary* states:

Fornication, Fornicator: is used (a) of "illicit sexual intercourse," in Jhn 8:41; Act 15:20, 29; 21:25; 1Cr 5:1; 6:13, 18; 2Cr 12:21; Gal 5:19; Eph 5:3; Col 3:5; 1Th 4:3; Rev 2:21; 9:21; in the plural in 1Cr 7:2; in Mat 5:32; 19:9 it stands for, or includes, adultery; it is distinguished from it in Mat 15:19; Mar 7:21.

Of many other arguments that could be made, from a variety of different contexts and words used, I would note the "one flesh" motif:

Matthew 19:4-6: He answered, "Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder." (cf. Mark 10:8)

This is obviously a reference to intercourse, so that becoming "one flesh" is clearly morally done after being married, not before. St. Paul expands the argument and ties it in with the notion of the Church and Christ:

Ephesians 5:28-33: Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church; however, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

The husband loves his wife because he is one flesh with her, just as Christ and His Church are one. This presupposes that sexuality is proper only within marriage. Thus, St. Paul offers a contrast of unlawful sexuality elsewhere, by noting how utterly immoral and improper in the Christian scheme of things,

sexual union is outside of marriage:

1 Corinthians 6:9, 11, 15-20: Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor sexual perverts. . . . And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God. . . . Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, “The two shall become one flesh.” But he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Shun immorality. Every other sin which a man commits is outside the body; but the immoral man sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Again, quite clearly, premarital sex is immoral, and not just when a prostitute is involved, but any unmarried woman and man. It’s not fashionable to say this today (and certainly not “sensitive” or delicate), but so what? People sometimes need to be jolted into reality. We must preach against sin from the rooftops. Christianity was never about being trendy and fashionable. It’s a narrow road, and part of Christianity has always been “waiting until marriage.”

Just because we are in the aftermath of a disastrous sexual revolution and because cohabitation is now ultrafashionable as a new “norm” (i.e., “Everyone else is doing it, so why don’t we?”) doesn’t change that fact. Truth is truth, and right and wrong are what they are, and are so eternally.

The zeitgeist will continue to bring disaster: personal and societal. There is a reason we have myriad broken homes today. Putting the cart before the horse doesn’t work. With otherwise “serious” Christians (although I would debate even that) fornicating by the millions, we need to have as strong a message as we can against it, lest they ruin their lives, like millions before who wanted to deny Christian moral teaching.

There are many biblical passages forbidding premarital and extramarital sex — whenever “fornication” or “licentiousness” or “immorality” or “sexual immorality” or “sexual vice” (various translations) are mentioned. To deny

this is like saying, “There is no verse that says, ‘The Holy Trinity is God in three persons.’ ” Sure, but there are hundreds of passages that, all taken together, teach the Holy Trinity, which is why all Christians have believed in that doctrine. A few heretical cults and sects deny it and claim that the Bible never teaches it.

No passage says, “Original Sin affects the entire human race.” There isn’t nearly as much in the Bible (as with, for example, the virgin birth) about that topic, but more than enough to establish that it is true, which is why, again, all Christian groups have accepted it, save a few fringe, semi-heretical groups such as Churches of Christ.

The problem, I submit, is not the unclearness of Scripture but rather the unwillingness to accept a difficult teaching and to counter worldly teachings and fashionable trends (post sexual revolution) in order to hold to biblical and traditional Christian teaching. In research projects I have undertaken over the past thirty-three years, I’ve always found that Scripture is pretty clear.

I maintain that the prohibition against sex outside of marriage is quite sufficiently clear in Scripture. It requires just a little bit of study. For anyone familiar with the Bible, it’s manifestly there, which is precisely why this was the uniform teaching among evangelical Protestants until we came to this place now where it is fashionable in those circles to question it.

There are lots of clear passages condemning homosexual acts, yet lots and lots of Christians continue to butcher the Bible to find support for that. Young people are becoming overwhelmingly in favor of “gay marriage.”

There is no support for female clergy or priests in the Bible, and much about an all-male priesthood, but does that matter? No. These two things are fashionable, so it doesn’t matter a hill of beans what Scripture actually says, or what tradition and history have held.

There’s plenty in the Bible about not murdering and not sacrificing children (I’ve collected it myself), yet almost all Protestant denominations have espoused abortion. Again, it was fashionable, so it was done despite what the Bible taught.

The same dynamic is present in this debate. I don’t think most people who want to water down the true teaching are simply carnal monsters. It’s complex, as with all human motivation. We understand the drives (believe me, I do). People interpret in a framework. They sort of “go with the flow.”

This is what is ominous today. As the zeitgeist goes more and more against moral tradition, people jump on the bandwagon. Scripture becomes irrelevant.

And if we Catholics agree that Scripture is so radically unclear on these issues, we help support the tendency, even though we oppose it. We “condemn” those who will *not* consult Catholic tradition and the Church to believing the trends and the fad, by saying no one can arrive at the truth in the Bible by itself on the issue of premarital sex.

Does 1 Corinthians Sanction Premarital Sex?

I ran across a guy who thought he had proven the permissibility of premarital sex in the Bible. He considered the passage he produced especially compelling for his position in the King James Version. Here it is:

1 Corinthians 7:36-38: But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry. Nevertheless he that standeth stedfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well. So then he that *giveth her in marriage* doeth well; but he that *giveth her not in marriage* doeth better.

Let's look very closely at the passage in context, and with consideration of the original Greek, and see if the apostle Paul explicitly sanctions premarital sexuality, as this person claimed.

The passage is not even talking about a man and his future bride (betrothed, engaged, or at least seriously in love). Paul is referring, rather, to a *father* and his *daughter*, in the context of a culture where marriages were usually arranged by the parents or at least took place with their permission and consent.

The key is the phrase “giveth her in marriage” — which makes no sense in terms of the relation of a man and future wife. It is the father who “gives in marriage.” We use this terminology even today in the wedding ceremony. So something is awry here, at least in *some* translations. If indeed the passage is about a father and daughter, rather than an engaged couple, everything changes.

One must understand what refers to what in the passage. Paul is saying that a father who gives his daughter in marriage does well; if he does not, it is even better. It is a “good and better” contrast, such as Paul makes earlier in the chapter regarding the higher path of remaining celibate and single (1 Cor. 7:1, 7-8, 25-27, 32-35, 38) versus getting married (also a very good thing: 1 Cor. 7:2, 9, 28, 38).

Paul's main point in all cases is that everyone should live as he is called by God to do: whether married or single (1 Cor. 7:7, 17, 20, 24). But the single state is to be celibate, not involving the sin of fornication (1 Cor. 7:2, 9; cf. 1 Cor. 6:9, 15-20).

So why the confusion in some translations as to whether this "virgin" is a betrothed future wife of a man or his *daughter*? The original Greek might explain some of that. The literal phrase in 1 Corinthians 7:37 is "*terein ten heautou parthenon*," translated by A. T. Robertson in his *Word Pictures in the New Testament* as "to keep his own virgin daughter." That this verse refers to a virgin daughter of a man is verified by the *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, by W. E. Vine (listed under "Virgin / Parthenos"):

Those concerning whom the Apostle Paul gives instructions regarding marriage, 1 Cor 7:25, 28, 34; in 1 Cor 7:36-38, the subject passes to that of "virgin daughters" (RV), which almost certainly formed one of the subjects upon which the church at Corinth sent for instructions from the Apostle; one difficulty was relative to the discredit which might be brought upon a father (or guardian), if he allowed his daughter or ward to grow old unmarried. The interpretation that this passage refers to a man and woman already in some kind of relation by way of a spiritual marriage and living together in a vow of virginity and celibacy, is untenable if only in view of the phraseology of the passage.

Joseph H. Thayer's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* concurs (Strong's word no. 3933): "one's marriageable daughter, 1 Co. vii. 36 sqq."²⁶

What about the business of "giving the daughter"? According to Robertson:

Paul commends the father who gives his daughter in marriage (*gamizei*). This verb *gamizw* has not been found outside the N.T. See on Matthew 22:30.

Matthew 22:30 reads:

For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. (cf. Mark 12:25; Luke 20:34-35)

Note also the related passages:

Luke 17:27: They ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. (cf. Matt. 24:38)

This is the same notion as in 1 Corinthians 7:38. Note the contrast between “marry” and “given in marriage.” These are different concepts. The first refers to the man and wife, as subject; the second to the father “giving” his daughter (away) in marriage.

The Greek word in Matthew 22:30, Luke 17:27, and 1 Corinthians 7:38 is *ekgamizo* (Strong’s word no. 1547), from the root *gamos* (Strong’s word no. 1062), “marry.” Likewise, in Mark 12:25 it is *gamisko* (Strong’s word no. 1061), “given in marriage.” And Luke 20:34-35 uses the cognate *ekgamisto* (Strong’s word no. 1548). Thayer’s lexicon confirms the meanings of all these:

to give a daughter in marriage: 1 Co. vii. 38 . . . Mt. xxii. 30 . . . Mk. xii. 25; Lk. xvii. 27; xx. 35 . . . (p. 109, under no. 1060a)

to give away . . . in marriage: a daughter, 1 Co. vii. 38 . . . Mt. xxiv. 38 . . . Pass. *to marry, to be given in marriage*, Mt. xxii. 30 . . . ; Lk. xvii. 27 . . . (p. 193, under no. 1547)

So we know what the basic meaning of the passage is now, and it has nothing even to do with sanctioned sexual intercourse of betrothed couples. It has to do, in point of fact, with parental permission or arrangement of marriage: father to daughter.

I submit that the lexicons are very clear that an unmarried daughter is being referred to here and that the phrase “given in marriage” is particularly decisive for this position.

Further arguments from general context confirm my argument. For example:

1 Corinthians 7:1-2: Now concerning the matters about which you wrote. It is well for a man not to touch a woman. But because of the temptation to immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.

Paul here clearly, I think, recommends marriage as the *resolution* of the problem of sexual temptation. Marriage is the place wherein sexuality is morally consummated and the natural desires channeled properly, in the overall safety of a commitment. The same dynamic occurs seven verses later:

1 Corinthians 7:9: But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion.

Paul presupposes that (sexual) self-control is the norm and the goal. Failing that, the solution is to marry, not to indulge *anyway*, regardless of marriage, as if there is nothing wrong with that.

²⁶ Joseph H. Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1977), 489.

Thoughts on Women's Ordination

I love the fact that in my Catholic tradition, Mary, Mother of God the Son, is the very highest and holiest creature and that we have Doctors of the Church who are women (St. Teresa of Ávila, St. Thérèse of Lisieux, and St. Catherine of Siena).

No women priests? I say: so what? Different roles for different folks. Lots of other roles and functions. If God had wanted women priests He would have had a woman (or maybe six of them) — it seems quite obvious to me — among His twelve apostles. The fact that He didn't is surely highly significant.

What is the “context” of Jesus' having all male apostles? The culture of the time? Jesus wasn't reluctant to puncture sacred cows. If He wanted to have women priests and pastors, He surely would have modeled that in His disciples.

The same Paul who referred to “no male or female in Christ” also casually stated that “a bishop must be above reproach, the husband of one wife” (1 Tim. 3:2) and “Let deacons be the husband of one wife” (1 Tim 3:12). He didn't say, “A bishop must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, or the wife of one husband.”

He assumes without question that it is men only. Are we to say that his teaching regarding offices in the Church was culturally relative? That would have all kinds of massive implications for all kinds of things. Paul's teaching could be used to justify just about anything.

But I would deny that the restriction of priesthood to men is a matter of some screaming “inequality” in the first place. It has to do, rather, with God-ordained vocation differentiation. I can't give birth to children. I don't go around complaining about that. It's the way God made things, so I accept it. It's the same with this issue. But because it is an “ontologically spiritual” thing and not a more obvious and undeniable physical thing, it's controversial.

Any woman (in the Catholic tradition — look at St. Catherine — and I

think in most, if not all, Protestant traditions) can go out and preach on the streets and evangelize all she likes. She can care for the poor; she can lead Bible studies and prayer meetings. She can do a host of things. And in fact many women do so in actuality. No one is stopping them.

All of that is different from being a priest or a pastor and presiding over the Holy Eucharist. For us Catholics, and for Orthodox, being a priest or a pastor is not merely being a good preacher or a great Bible student or a prayer warrior. It inherently involves supernatural sacramentalism: the power to preside over the miracle of the Eucharist, to grant absolution, et cetera. He directly represents Jesus Christ (*alter Christus*), and Jesus was a man.

The Bible fundamentally contradicts the notion of women's ordination. My examples of all male apostles and Paul's assumption of male bishops and elders are two examples of that. Here are two more:

1 Timothy 3:1: If any one aspires to the office of bishop, *he* desires a noble task.

Titus 1:7: For a bishop, as God's steward, must be blameless; *he* must not be arrogant.

It's fine to have a personal opinion, but the Christian's task is to harmonize such opinions with the scriptural data. It's impossible to do that (I humbly and respectfully submit) on this issue, and not because it is an argument from silence, but because it flatly contradicts passages such as the above.

Then the advocate has a huge problem of how to interpret Paul and Jesus consistently, within any interpretive grid. The Bible is not a wax nose, to be molded at will. It teaches things that can't be dismissed merely because it is faddish and fashionable in a given *zeitgeist* to deny biblical teachings.

More power to women who teach and do all kinds of ministries. I'm deeply devoted to the Blessed Virgin Mary and *love* many female saints in the Catholic tradition.

Philosophical Defense of the Necessity of Hell

I think we oftentimes project onto God thoughts of our own. Some people, for instance, reduce hell to some kind of petty revenge on God's part or His desire to torture people who disagree with Him. I don't think any of this is true. I wrote in one of my debates with an agnostic:

Those who go to hell do so of their own free will, by their own free choice, having rejected the God, whose existence and nature is "clearly seen" by all (Romans 1). For the life of me, I don't understand why this should be so objectionable: God allows free creatures to reject Him and even spend eternity without Him if they so desire. Would you rather have Him force you to go to heaven rather than give you the freedom to choose heaven or hell as your ultimate destination? In any event, the existence of hell is no proof whatsoever that God is evil. It proves (almost more than anything else) that men are free.

It's not that God forces people to follow Him but that they don't *want* to follow Him, often because of misconceptions about what it means to follow God as a disciple.

Once we die, we enter into a timeless eternity, which cannot be other than what it is. Therefore, once we grant that there are moral distinctions to be made in this life, between good and evil, and we grant that there is a good God, it seems rather straightforward that the concept of divine justice would make it absolutely necessary for there to be a rather definite and compelling cosmic justice and weighing of the facts of what a person has done and believed in this life.

The necessity of judgment is apparent from the human analogy of laws and judges. When we do bad things, there are consequences. And often, they are irreversible. If we murder a person, that person is gone from the earth forever. The act had a consequence that to us, from the earthly, temporal perspective, is final. If we get drunk and ride a motorcycle and crash and have to lose an arm or a leg or suffer brain damage, those things are irreversible. The dumb behavior had definite consequences. A price had to be paid.

This is simply reality. By analogy, if (as I would strongly contend) the dumbest thing a person can do is reject and disbelieve in God, or in His goodness and mercy, then we would expect that there would be some extremely severe consequences to this in the long run.

Since souls are eternal by nature, that consequence is an unending place or state that is separate from God, and we have no remote conception now of how horrible it is. And to end in hell is entirely our fault, not God's. So why would anyone in effect "try God" for the existence of hell, since no one ever had to go there in the first place? It's like blaming a judge, who gives the sentence, for the existence of a penitentiary. Does that make any sense? Yet this is essentially what people do by finding hell objectionable and somehow a thing that casts aspersions on God's character.

God the Father has provided a way for any man to be saved who desires to. He has made the way of salvation available through the death of His Son Jesus, who is in fact God, the second Person of the Holy Trinity. Catholicism isn't Calvinism; it doesn't teach that God predestines people to hell. I think that view (double predestination) does indeed lay God open to the charge of cruelty and arbitrariness and injustice.

Catholicism and Arminian Protestantism and Orthodoxy (which constitute the vast majority of Christians now and at all times throughout Christian history) reject this. When it is seen that people choose hell of their own free will and that God allows them to go there if they insist, that takes the "blame" off God, in my opinion. There is a strong sense in which it is absurd even to blame God for it, just as men habitually blame God for every evil: including ones that are the fault of man altogether (things such as the Holocaust or unjust laws or wars).

One who questions hell and the justice of it has to step back and ask himself: "On what *basis* do I find an eternal state apart from God nonsensical or implausible or impossible?" This entails a necessary examination of anthropology: From a theological perspective: what is man? Of what does he consist? Does he have a soul; what is that, and is it temporal, or does it have no end? Is there such a thing as sin? If so, how does God judge it, and what are its consequences? Is there such a thing as Original Sin, or the Fall, sufficiently serious enough in its rebelliousness and wrongdoing to require in the nature of things justice and punishment from the God against whom we have rebelled? Is this corporate, involving the whole human race (as the Bible

clearly teaches)?

On what possible basis can one conclude that an eternal existence apart from God, of creatures who have expressly rejected this God, is an a priori impossible or unjust or implausible state of affairs?

To me it's rather simple: we are creatures who will exist from this point into the future. We will never have an end to our existence. We're like a ray in geometry: with a beginning but no end. We can be with God in eternity after we die or without Him. The choice is ours. No one has to go to hell if he will simply believe in God and follow Him, enabled by His grace to do so. These things are essentially matters of faith, part of revelation. But they are also able to be defended by many analogies to human experience and felt internal conceptions of morality and justice.

It cannot be proven that there is no such thing as atemporality. Even the laws of physics after Einstein make it rather difficult to prove. Therefore, if there is an existence outside of time or beyond time or in other dimensions, then those who have chosen certain paths will be present in this state either happily or unhappily, just as they will live on in this state in basically one condition or the other, in the deepest depths of their heart and soul.

Let's examine each of the alternative choices, to see if it makes more sense than an eternal hellfire (and heaven):

1. God chooses to annihilate people rather than having them be eternal creatures (i.e., from the time of their origin, not absolutely, like God, who has no beginning or end).

We reason, based in part on the revelation about the existence of both eternity and souls, that souls too are included in the class of things that cannot be otherwise: that they are what they are (in terms of duration) by *nature*. They are unending, just as a ray in geometry is unending. They simply keep going indefinitely, analogous to rays of light that will travel throughout the universe without end.

We might not understand it, but is it *inconceivable*? No, not at all. I see nothing implausible or unreasonable at all in the notion. And if we accept this and also some law of justice that applies to all sentient beings with moral responsibility, we arrive at the Christian notion of heaven and hell as final destination places or conditions.

2. God chooses to annihilate the ones who aren't worthy of salvation (this is

the Jehovah's Witness and Christadelphian belief).

This is certainly possible, but it is contrary to biblical revelation, and it has the characteristic of "metaphysical asymmetry." If saved souls live forever, then it would seem to follow that damned souls would also, not that they would be annihilated, because in both cases, human souls are involved, and souls have the characteristic of being either temporary or endless. So it would seem to make a lot more sense that either all souls are annihilated or none (in order to have one consistent definition of a soul), but not one class only.

3. God chooses not to judge anyone at all. The evil as well as the good all end up the same. There is no "cosmic justice."

This would make the world a meaningless place, where there are no consequences of good or evil actions. That is far more horrible than the state of affairs in which good, saved people are eternally happy and bad, damned ones eternally miserable. Instead, we can commit any evil whatever and not expect any undesirable consequences for our actions. That would make God worse than the worst person imaginable. He would become evil Himself, as well as a weakling and the furthest thing from omnipotent.

4. God saves everyone.

This is also logically possible, but the problem is that it makes mincemeat of human free will, and it makes moral behavior meaningless. And, of course, it is utterly contrary to biblical revelation, if a person believes in that by faith.

5. God predestines all to hell no matter what they do or believe (the flip side of number 4).

Since this is a variation of number 4, it is subject to the same replies. We conclude, then, that the Christian scenario of heaven and hell makes (philosophically) far more sense (considered apart from revelation) than any of the alternatives.

Why do disbelievers in hell have this notion that God must work *eternally* to redeem souls? He is under no such obligation. He only has to give every person an adequate chance to believe in Him or reject Him, and we believe as Christians, based on revelation, that He more than amply does that in this lifetime.

Critics of hell presuppose that what God does to redeem a stray soul is never enough, but then we're back to blaming God again for the rebel, rather than placing the blame with the rebel, which is where it belongs. This makes

no sense. We always want to blame God for everything. It's a sort of "cosmic blame shifting." We never want to blame evil, rebellious man for anything. He's always a poor, pitiful victim, and it's always God, God, God who is supposedly at fault for not having done enough.

Do we blame a parent when he does absolutely everything he should to train and provide for a child, yet the child goes astray in the exercise of his free will? Is it the parent's fault (at least in terms of primary responsibility) or the child's?

God could either give us a free will or create us as robots who followed His commands. Would we rather be robots? Once free will is granted, it makes sense to speak of good and bad eternal destinations.

To use our legal system analogy again: the judge says that a person can be paroled, given a few (not at all impossible) conditions. This is legal "mercy." But the prisoner fails to abide by these, and so he doesn't gain parole. Now, in the thinking of those who don't like hell and want to blame God for it, the one to blame for this is the parole officer or judge, because He didn't exercise enough mercy and should have forgiven the prisoner an infinite amount of times for all his violations.

In my thinking, the prisoner is at fault, not the judge, because the judge exercised clemency and mercy, and the prisoner in his stupidity failed to do the few things he had to do to receive this gracious gift.

The Church has not ruled out a possible salvation right after death. We simply don't know much about it, from revelation alone. But there is no concept of a "long" time after death or souls going from hell to heaven. Those in purgatory are saved. It is inevitable that they will be in heaven in due course. That's entirely different from the reprobate in hell.

God doesn't judge as men do — outwardly only. He knows the secrets of our hearts, so that He judges justly and fairly. No one will be sent to hell for lacking sufficient knowledge (Rom. 2:15-16).

I believe in a perfectly merciful, loving, and just God. I don't lose one second's sleep wondering about whether His judgment of souls is fair or not. *Of course* it is. Jesus reveals the nature of God and His love.

The Stupidity of the Devil

Satan was silly enough actually to think that he could entice Jesus to sin and diversion from His ministry. He was too ignorant in his evil irrationality to know that his scheme was doomed to failure from the beginning. We give the devil too much credit. He is an idiot and simpleton as well as a “bad guy.”

I say he’s stupid. How else should we describe a creature who was present with God as His highest angel, yet chose to give that up and rebel? I can think of nothing dumber and more ridiculous. The biblical definition of a fool (see, e.g., Ps. 53:1; Prov. 10:8; 12:15; 14:16; 28:26; Gal. 3:1-3) is one who has rebelled against God and who has a contempt for righteousness. In other words, I’m using *stupid* as synonymous with *foolish* or *ludicrous*, not with reference to mere intellectual capability only.

Craftiness or cleverness is not at all incompatible with monumental stupidity. Stalin and Hitler possessed both qualities in abundance. Hitler made very basic military errors, such as trying to fight two major fronts (east and west) at the same time, and attacking Russia as winter approached (the same grave mistake that Napoleon had made some 125 years earlier).

In 1942, the same year that the great apologist C. S. Lewis wrote *The Screwtape Letters*, he also wrote *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (on John Milton’s seventeenth-century epic poem on the devil and angels). In that work Lewis wrote:

It is a mistake to demand that Satan . . . should be able to rant and posture through the whole universe without, sooner or later, awaking the comic spirit. . . . At that precise point where Satan . . . meets something real, laughter *must* arise, just as steam must when water meets fire . . . and mere Christianity commits every Christian to believing that “the Devil is (in the long run) an ass.” . . . What we see in Satan is the horrible co-existence of a subtle and incessant intellectual activity with an incapacity to understand anything. This doom he has brought upon himself; in order to avoid seeing one thing he has, almost voluntarily, incapacitated himself from seeing at all. . . . He says, “Evil be thou my good” (which includes “Nonsense be thou my sense”) and his prayer is

granted.²⁷

This sounds to me exactly like a simpleton and a fool. Nothing is dumber and more foolish and absurd than rebellion against God. The very definition of *fool* in the Bible is a person who either doesn't believe in God or doesn't follow Him as his master. I don't care how high the devil's IQ is! What good is it, seeing where he will end up? *Stupidity*, as I use it, includes a moral judgment. I'm not just using it to denote mere lack of knowledge or analytical ability. This is the biblical perspective on wisdom and knowledge.

I don't think it takes a rocket scientist to deduce that the penalty for continued rebellion against God was bound to be extremely severe. Satan should have recognized that his estate was far less glorious than what he had in heaven with God. But evil is irrational by its very nature. People (and demons) who have lowered themselves want nothing more than to drag others down with them.

Our culture defines intelligence strictly in terms of IQ and the number of big words mastered and college degrees, to the neglect of moral, spiritual, and prudential elements. I much prefer the terms *knowledge* (*gnosis*) and *wisdom* (*sophia*), as I think these are the more biblical (i.e., culturally Hebrew / Jewish) categories of classification.

The devil thinks, but he doesn't "understand." He may be smart in terms of brain power, but he is a fool. His moral decisions have led to nonsense.

²⁷ C. S. Lewis, *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), 95, 99.

Demonic Possession or Epilepsy?

Matthew 17:15, 18: “Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly; for often he falls into the fire, and often into the water.” . . . And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured instantly.

This is interesting, since it implies that epilepsy is caused by a demon, whereas we know that it has natural causes. This translation and many others (as we shall see) insinuate that it is the equivalent of demonic possession. For example, the Moffatt, 20th Century, and Weymouth versions have “epileptic” here, while KJV, Rheims, and Young’s Literal have “lunatic[k].”

The older translations got it right, I think. But *lunatic* is a very unfashionable word. Of course, it is derived from observable patterns of behavior change based on the lunar cycle, which actually has some basis (we know that the moon affects the ocean tides as well). I would argue, then, that the older and more literal (and Catholic) translations are more consistent with both biblical and scientific thinking, while those that select *epileptic* here are less coherent on both scores.

The Greek word in question is *seleniazomai* (Strong’s word no. 4583). *Strong’s Concordance* defines it as “crazy; lunatic.” *Thayer’s Lexicon* does mention “epileptic,” stating that it was influenced by the moon. But that is more evidence of natural cause, which is different from demonic cause, and in this instance, a demon was cast out.

A. T. Robertson’s *Word Pictures in the New Testament* wants to have it both ways:

Epileptic . . . Literally, “moonstruck,” “lunatic.” The symptoms of epilepsy were supposed to be aggravated by the changes of the moon (cf. John 4:24).

Vincent’s Word Studies also curiously omits mention that a demon was cast out, curing this boy:

Is lunatic (σεληνιάζεται)

Rev., epileptic. The A. V. preserves the etymology of the word

(σελήνη, the moon) but lunatic conveys to us the idea of demented; while the Rev. epileptic gives the true character of the disease, yet does not tell us the fact contained in the Greek word, that epilepsy was supposed to be affected by the changes of the moon. See on Matthew 4:24.²⁸

Vine's Expository Dictionary states similarly. All these standard sources can be read online. The famous commentator Matthew Henry (Presbyterian) offers a fascinating (and, in my opinion, superior) “mixed” view:

The nature of this child's disease was very sad; he was lunatic and sore vexed. A lunatic is properly one whose distemper lies in the brain, and returns with the change of the moon. The devil, by the divine permission, either caused this distemper, or at least concurred with it, to heighten and aggravate it. The child had the falling-sickness, and the hand of Satan was in it; by it he tormented then, and made it much more grievous than ordinarily it is. Those whom Satan got possession of, he afflicted by those diseases of the body which do most affect the mind; for it is the soul that he aims to do mischief to.

Catholic Commentary (Orchard, 1953), likewise, calls the boy a “possessed epileptic” (I suppose he could have had two problems simultaneously). I was curious about other translations:

- *Slunatic*: KJV, Rheims, Young's Literal, NASB, Phillips, Jerusalem, NAB, Confraternity, Knox
- *epileptic* or *epilepsy*: RSV, Moffatt, 20th Century, Weymouth, NEB, REB, NIV, NRSV, ASV, NKJV, Amplified, Williams, Beck, Goodspeed, Wuest, Barclay, Lamsa
- *subject to fits*: Kleist and Lilly

The pattern, then, is older Bibles and Catholic Bibles using *lunatic* and Protestant and more recent Bibles using *epileptic*. The exceptions are Phillips and the NASB: Protestant versions from the 1950s and '60s. I prefer *lunatic*: on the basis that it is closer to the notion of “demon possessed” than *epileptic* is.

²⁸ “A.V.” refers to “Authorised Version” of the Bible; more popularly known as the King James Bible of 1611. “Rev.” refers to the “Revised Version of the A.V., which came out in 1881 (New Testament) and 1885 (Old Testament). It became more or less obsolete with the advent

of the Revised Standard Version (1946 / 1952). Marvin Vincent's *Word Studies in the New Testament* was published in 1887.

The Reality of Hell

The Catholic Church teaches that our fate is sealed at (or very soon after) death, and this is why it is so important to “die a good death.” God can give much grace near the end, but once we die, the chances are done with. We are either saved or damned. Universalism is not possible under Catholic, Orthodox, or Protestant assumptions and the Bible’s teaching.

As for a conditional hell and so forth, I don’t buy it, based on Scripture, tradition, and reason. The Athanasian Creed declares: “But those who have done evil will go into eternal fire.” The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) stated: “Those [the rejected] will receive a perpetual punishment with the devil.” The councils of Lyons and Florence taught that the souls of the damned are punished with unequal punishment. The *Catechism* teaches the reality of an eternal hell for the reprobate who reject God (nos. 1033-1037, 1861).

Catholics are, therefore, not at liberty to reject this doctrine. It’s a dogma of the Church. If it weren’t true, there wouldn’t be so many warnings in the Bible to avoid this horrible destiny. What sense does it make for a governor to warn everyone about the horrors of prison, when he intends to pardon everyone and send them on a vacation in Hawaii from the beginning?

There are many unmistakable biblical teachings concerning hell. To give one example that is sufficient in and of itself, consider the judgment scene of Matthew 25:31-46. Jesus Himself says to the damned: “Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt. 25:41). Matthew 25:46 summarizes: “And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Now, if someone wants to do away with an eternal hell, the problem here is that the same word is used to describe the duration of both heaven and hell: *aionios* (eternal, everlasting). It is used in several places to describe eternal punishment (Matt. 18:8; 25:41,46; Mark 3:29; 2 Thess. 1:9; Heb. 6:2; Jude 7).

Case closed. One has to either accept this or deny that Scripture is inspired and infallible revelation. One believes these things in faith, but they are not

contrary to reason at all. Philosophical and moral objections to hell are another thing entirely, too. It may be highly difficult to comprehend, like many things of God, but it is clearly taught in revelation, so the Christian must accept it and have faith that God knows what He is doing and is merciful and just (as we see in the life of Jesus, the Passion, and His death for us on the Cross).

Again, if no men go to hell, why is so much of the New Testament devoted to warning men not to end up there by virtue of their rejection of God? Why would the Church tell us that all mortal sins place us in potential danger of hellfire when, in fact, that never occurs because no men actually end up in hell?

That makes no sense at all. It seems to me that if universalism were in fact the true state of affairs and that all men end up in heaven, then we would be informed of this in the Bible, as it is a wonderful truth. Instead, God plays a sort of game by scaring us half to death with all this business about hell and fire and torture and all, and then no one goes there anyway except the devil and his demons.

I find that as silly and implausible as a parent who constantly scares his children with threats of punishment, but never follows through with any of it. Just as the child would not believe the parent when they make such claims, after a few years of that, I wouldn't trust God's word, either, if He acted in such a weird, arbitrary fashion with us, involving virtual deception.

Matthew 25 is clearly not an instance of a conditional prophecy (such as Nineveh or Sodom and Gomorrah, or many such prophecies given to the Israelites, contingent on their obedience to the Law). It is a description, rather, by Jesus Himself, of what *will* happen at the judgment, not what "might" happen, or only one scenario, or in terms of "*if* you do this, you'll be saved; if not, you'll be damned."

Jesus describes a scene that will actually happen. He *will* come again (Matt. 25:31). He *will* (not "may") sit and judge all the nations and separate them as sheep and goats (Matt. 25:32). He *will* say to the damned: "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41).

This is a fact of history that God already knows, even though it is future to us. Therefore, there *will* be people in hell. It's undeniable, unarguable (if one accepts Scripture). The only "conditional" here is whether a person will

accept the plain teaching of Scripture.

The following passage explicitly states that certain people are damned and undergoing eternal punishment:

Jude 7: just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise acted immorally and indulged in unnatural lust, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

By direct implication (Jude 5, considered in context), God also sent to hell the disobedient Hebrews in the wilderness (see Exod. 32:15-35). Exodus 15:33 refers to God's blotting people out of His "book" (cf. Rev. 3:5). These people are damned! Nothing anywhere in the Bible suggests that they are given some chance to avoid their fate.

In fact, in Revelation 13:8 we learn that some people's names have "not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain" (cf. Rev. 17:8). Again, by cross-referencing in this manner, the conclusion is unavoidable:

1. There is such a thing as a "book of life" that lists the elect and the saved.
2. Some people's names are not listed there or can be "blotted out." Revelation 21:27 informs us that no one who is not written in this book can enter heaven.
3. Therefore, those people are damned (and this is directly, expressly, explicitly stated in Revelation 20:11-15).
4. Therefore, there are people in hell (these same people), because hell is described as the place of eternal punishment and separation from God.
5. The people of "Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities" are literally described as "undergoing a punishment of eternal fire."
6. The disobedient Hebrews in the wilderness are placed in the same category, and by cross-referencing to Exodus we again encounter the concept of the "book of life." So are those described in Revelation 20:11-15.
7. Ergo, the proposition: "people are definitely in hell" is undeniably affirmed in Scripture in general terms (the above and Matthew 25) and in specific terms (Jude 5-7).

Another fairly direct proof that there are people in hell is all those folks of

whom it is said that they will not inherit the kingdom of God, or heaven:

1. Many Jews who have ceased to believe, sufficient unto salvation. It is specifically stated that they “will be thrown into the outer darkness” (Matt. 8:11-12).
2. The evil who are compared to bad fish in a catch. The angels *will* (not “may”) “throw them into the furnace of fire” (Matt. 13:47-50).
3. Jesus said it was “hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 19:23-24). Thus it stands to reason that many will *not* inherit heaven.
4. In the parable of the wedding feast, the man “who had no wedding garment” is “cast into the outer darkness.” Jesus ends by saying, “many are called, but few are chosen” (Matt. 22:1-14).
5. Those who aren’t “born anew” cannot see the kingdom (John 3:3).
6. Various categories of unrepentant sinners “will *not* inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:9-10 and Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:5).
7. “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” Unregenerate natural man without supernatural assistance and God’s grace (1 Cor. 15:49-50).

At the judgment at the great white throne, people were judged on the basis of “the book of life.” It is obviously a matter of differential eternal destinies. “Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:14). This clearly means that those in Hades (who hadn’t been taken to heaven with the advent of Jesus) were now sentenced to hell.

The same applies to Matthew 25. If it is not describing actual events of the end times, it is a false prophecy (from Jesus Himself), trying to get across the notion that people will be damned by the express proclamation of our Lord, when in fact no such thing happens because all are saved. This does violence to Scripture and the plain meaning of the English language.

My challenge to universalists or annihilationists or those who deny an eternal hell is to tell me how Jesus would speak if indeed many men went to hell. I contend that He could hardly be any clearer than He already is. People don’t accept it because they have an objection to hell and eternal damnation before they even approach the text, and so they eisegete — that is, they arbitrarily read their own preferences into the text.

If all, in fact, are to be saved, God would certainly make that crystal-clear, precisely because the doctrine of hell is so troubling to many, even those who fully accept it; and the passages noted above would either be entirely absent or would read vastly differently.

A Perfect God Creating an Imperfect World

What God creates is already less perfect than He is, just by the fact that it is *created*, whereas He is eternal and uncreated. So, for example, men are not omniscient or omnipotent or omnipresent, as God is. They're not absolutely perfect, and indeed cannot be, since there is only one God, who is perfect and self-existent, needing nothing whatsoever. Men are limited in knowledge and ability. This is what caused the Fall: Adam and Eve did what was not best for them, for lack of knowledge and faith in God.

The fallacy in the atheist premise and attempted "difficulty" for Christianity is that paradise was perfect. It wasn't perfect, because it wasn't God. It was without sin at first and was "good," but the limitations were there, causing the rebellion and the Fall.

The basic problem is that there is (1) God and (2) everything else that is not God. What is not God can never be equal to God, and even God can't make it so. God can't create a second God, because that wouldn't be God: not being eternal and self-existent.

All (in this alleged conundrum) depends on what *perfect* means. God created the angels, and they had a choice to sin or not to sin. Most of them chose not to and have remained that way ever since. Some, including Satan, chose to rebel against God. Most of what causes pain and suffering is because of man's sin, and the rest is due to the fixed nature of the physical world (if you fall off a building and strike a hard surface, you get hurt or even die). That's not God's fault at all. If we have physical matter, and some of it is sharp or hard, sometimes people will get hurt.

None of atheists' rhetoric and argumentation about "imperfect worlds" disproves anything about God or Christianity. But atheists keep coming back with more fallacious arguments, based on false premises. If we "solve" one problem, they simply come up with another "objection" in their bag of tricks. I've been through the routine myself a hundred times. Many atheists just want to play games when it comes to discussions of Christianity. I've talked to many dozens of them. It's usually not a serious discussion (on occasion it is). They habitually try to "trap" the Christian and make Christianity and

Christians look silly (so they can feel better in their self-delusion of atheism and feel mentally superior). That's child's play, not serious thinking or seeking of truth.

Just because Christians may not always have a ready answer to atheists' relentless questioning, that doesn't prove anything. Atheists don't have answers for many things. I have cornered them with logic many times and found that they didn't have an answer. It works both ways. But the bottom line is not to "trap" someone but to share truth with him and get him to see what is false.

The real (*far* more serious) problem is not the problem of evil, but the "problem of good": how does one define "good" without a God? I can attest from long experience in discussion of these matters that the problem of good is exponentially more difficult to resolve than the problem of evil (the most serious and respectable objection to Christianity) ever was or ever will be.

Can God Be Blamed for the Nazi Holocaust?

I would say the whole abominable mess of World War II and Hitler could have very easily been prevented if folks had listened to one man: Winston Churchill. But such is the folly of men that they want to believe that everything is fine (the Neville Chamberlain appeasement mentality).

Churchill warned all through the 1930s of the German military buildup, but no one wanted to listen to him. At the same time, Malcolm Muggeridge was exposing Stalin's starving of ten million Ukrainians, but no one wanted to listen to him either.

It's as simple as that. Germany was disarmed after World War I. What happened a mere fifteen years later, when they started building tanks and fighter planes again? Nothing, of course.

C. S. Lewis estimated that four-fifths of the evil in the world is done by man to man. If something as terrible as World War II and the death camps and genocide (and the United States' wiping out of a hundred thousand at a time in Hiroshima, and the dreadful fire bombings of Dresden and Tokyo, so that we aren't innocent either) could have been prevented by the simplest common sense, and listening to one clear-minded man, where do we get off blaming *God* for this idiotic folly of mankind?

God is no more responsible for abortion than He was for Auschwitz and the other evils in the world. It is brought about by the unchecked evil of men. God wants *us* to do our duty of promoting justice and brotherhood in the world, not to miraculously intervene every time we screw things up yet again.

That part of the problem of evil is very simple to figure out, I think. The hard part is ascertaining why God, knowing how men would act, would allow free will anyway. In that sense, one might try to accuse God of cruelty, but that is where faith and acceptance of what God has revealed, and acknowledgment of our limitations in grasping these very deep mysteries, come in.

Christians see God suffering on the Cross, so we know that He is willing to go through what most of us have to endure: pain, suffering, humiliation,

betrayal, et cetera.

People wanted to live in a fantasy world and let the real one go to hell. During World War II, there wasn't a conspiracy against the Jews on the part of all mankind; rather, there was sheer stupidity and ignorance about the man and party who hated Jews and wished to kill them (along with the Slavs, Gypsies, Catholics, handicapped, mentally ill, left-wingers, Protestants, and many other categories, but the Jews were clearly most hated).

The more *primitive* biblical view was that good people prosper and the evil have all kinds of problems. That is true at the very deepest level, and long term, but not short term, and it is seen to be utterly simplistic in terms of this life.

The more developed Old Testament biblical perspective on suffering is that of Job: even the good people suffer (sometimes even extraordinarily, "unfairly" so) and it is ultimately a mystery why, requiring us to trust that God is good and has a purpose, despite all.

That's the whole point of the book of Job (especially the end, where God refers to His omnipotence, omniscience, and providence and says in effect: "Who are you to question anything about me? Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?" And so forth.

We must incorporate in our searching for answers, the more advanced, "mysterious" understanding of suffering as seen in Job, Isaiah 53, and many New Testament passages that we Catholics readily apply to the spiritual fruitfulness of penance for the sake of souls (just as prayer and charity do the same good). Suffering has a deep purpose. When we suffer we can apply that to other souls.

We all have to remind ourselves continually that God promises to make things *totally* right only by including the next life in the equation. This world can never be "right" or "normal" because it is a fallen world. All we can do is individually follow God and hope for the best, in temporal terms. We're just pilgrims. But we can have joy and peace despite all. That *is* promised.

Often the problem is that people do not what they should do, in the final analysis, because of "what *others* might think" (peer or social pressure). Half the things I've done in my life (and most of the best, in my opinion) were in the teeth of objections of friends and sometimes, extended family. I would never have become a Catholic or a writer or an apologist. I wouldn't have

been in Operation Rescue (a mild form of conscientious protest against an unjust society and mass murder by abortion). I wouldn't have even converted to evangelical Christianity in 1977 (my upbringing was nominal Methodist).

If we're so worried about mere social opinion and what our own circle will think of us, is it any wonder that folks (generally speaking) are so easily cowed into doing the will of dictators and abortion providers, no matter how outrageous, and will endure very little risk in order to avoid speaking out or acting in protest?

I think what could have been said to those who would have frowned on an early shutdown of Hitler is that there was no particularly compelling reason to think that the man didn't mean to do exactly as he had stated and had written in *Mein Kampf* (one might cite analogous behavior of the Communists who set out and did pretty much what Marx and especially Lenin predicted, and even more).

Hitler was an extremely serious guy. I think anyone could readily see that he meant business. Jews in Germany were certainly well aware of that early on. Why wasn't anyone else? It's the typical latent European anti-Semitism again, I suppose. Combine this with the history of German / Prussian militarism and aggression and the collection of misfits and moral monsters that Hitler was collecting in his government, and it didn't take a rocket scientist to see what was coming. Yet people are quick to blame *God* for men's follies, imbecilities, blindness, and stupidities.

World War II and all its hideous fruits are squarely the fault of men, not God. It's ridiculous for us to make a royal mess of things and then, when the chickens come home to roost, start whining and moaning, "Why did God allow *this*?" (and then prepare to make the same stupid mistakes all over again; learning absolutely nothing from history).

Indeed, it is an extremely serious and troubling philosophical question: why God allows the human free will that He knew would continually fail and cause great suffering and misery. But that's different from directly blaming God for "doing nothing," during the worst times of our butchering each other.

I think the free will defense in apologetics provides a fairly adequate answer, but there is always a gap left, making it difficult to understand why God allowed a thing that has entailed so much pain and suffering. We can accept it in faith, humbly acknowledging our limitations and God's goodness, but those without faith will understandably struggle quite a bit with it and feel

a perplexity that only faith brought about by God's grace and our cooperation with it is ultimately able to overcome.

The Inevitability of Development of Doctrine

C. S. Lewis, the famous Anglican apologist, once wrote:

The positive historical statements made by Christianity have the power . . . of receiving, without intrinsic change, the increasing complexity of meaning which increasing knowledge puts into them.

The Catholic Church, in agreement with Lewis, defines doctrinal development as a growth of depth and clarity in the understanding of the truths of divine revelation. It is important to understand that the substantial or essential truths at the core of each doctrine remain unchanged. Only the subjective grasp of men increases.

This increase is the result of the prayerful reflection of the Church, theological study and research (often occasioned by heretical challenges), practical experience, and the collective wisdom of the Church's bishops and popes, especially when joined in ecumenical councils.

Development (often described as an "acorn to oak tree" process) is pictured in the following biblical passage:

Matthew 13:31-32: The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.

Seeds and bodies grow and expand. Doctrine clearly develops within Scripture (what is also called "progressive revelation"). Examples of this process include the doctrines of the afterlife, the Trinity, the Messiah (eventually revealed as God the Son), the Holy Spirit (a Divine Person in the New Testament), the inclusion of Gentiles, bodily resurrection, and the sacrifice of lambs as a type and shadow of the sacrifice of Christ. Not a single doctrine initially emerges in the Bible complete with no further need of development.

The canon of Scripture itself is an example of developing doctrine (and a Church tradition). The New Testament never informs us which books belong to it, and its list of books took about 360 years to reach its definitive form (at

the council of Carthage in A.D. 397).

For instance, the books of Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, and Revelation were not widely accepted by the Church until 350. Fourteen of twenty-seven New Testament books, including Acts, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, and Colossians, were not mentioned until around A.D. 200.

Today's Church shouldn't be expected to look like the primitive Church if she is a living, vibrant, spiritual organism. But the early Church does already look very "Catholic." What we don't find in the early centuries is a "statue," doomed to be increasingly encroached upon by the "pigeon droppings" of a "corrupting" Catholicism, as is imagined by Protestants of the anti-Catholic variety.

Blessed John Henry Cardinal Newman (1801-1890), in his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (1845), the one indispensable work on this subject, pointed out that notions of suffering, or "vague forms of the doctrine of Purgatory," were virtually universally accepted in the first four centuries of the Church, whereas, the same cannot be said for the doctrine of Original Sin, which is agreed upon by Protestants and Catholics. Purgatory is not a later corruption, but was present early on and merely developed, and Original Sin was equally subject to development. Cardinal Newman observed:

If it be true that the principles of the later Church are the same as those of the earlier, then, whatever are the variations of belief between the two periods, the later in reality agrees more than it differs with the earlier, for principles are responsible for doctrines. Hence they who assert that the modern Roman system is the corruption of primitive theology are forced to discover some difference of principle between the one and the other.

This is true whether the theological considerations are those agreed upon by all, such as the divinity of Christ, the two natures of Christ, the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, and Original Sin, or those doctrines denied by all or most Protestants, such as the Marian dogmas, purgatory, the papacy, the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the Communion of Saints, priestly absolution, baptismal regeneration, and the Sacrifice of the Mass.

One could say that an automobile was "corrupt" if the owner decided that it would run better with half its spark plugs, watered-down gas, no rear brakes, one headlight, and three quarts less oil. Corruption can just as easily consist of subtractions as additions. Protestantism's charges of Catholic corruption,

then, only come back to incriminate Protestantism too, since it no longer holds many doctrines that were widely believed in the early Church.

The idea of doctrinal development provides, I believe, the key for understanding why the Catholic Church today often *appears on the surface* as very different from (and contrary to) the early Church.

New Testament Proofs of Noah's Existence

Often, Christians act as if the Old Testament is antiquated and of no relevance to Christianity — or, in extreme cases, to history — at all. Neither opinion is true. Explaining why would require two long articles; but setting those issues aside, we can still demonstrate how the New Testament regards particulars in the Old Testament. I thought it would be fun, informative, and helpful to apply that “technique” to the question of the historical existence of Noah.

On the Coming Home Network discussion forum that I used to moderate, one of the members related a horror story about a person who was leading a Bible study who taught that Abraham was “the first character in the Bible whom [Catholics] believe actually existed” and that Adam, Eve, Cain, Abel, Noah, and the others “may simply have been literary devices.”

This is not Catholic teaching. If Adam and Eve are not regarded as actual persons, and the parents of the human race, then the doctrine of the Fall of Man and Original Sin collapses, and we are not in need of being rescued from a fallen, sinful condition.

The *Catechism* refers to Adam and Eve eight times (nos. 375, 399, 404, 411, 417, 635, 766, 2361), and ties in their rebellion to the Fall of man (nos. 399, 404, 417). St. Paul makes several historical references to Adam or Eve, or both (Rom. 5:14; 1 Cor. 15:22, 45; 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:13-14).

Likewise, Cain and Abel are referred to as actual men twice (*Catechism*, nos. 401, 2259), and their actions are also connected to Original Sin. Our Lord Jesus refers quite literally to Abel (Matt. 23:34-35; cf. Luke 11:51). The author of Hebrews includes Abel in his catalogue of the heroes of the faith (Heb. 11:4), and talks about his “blood” (Heb. 12:24).

God made a covenant with Noah. It's pretty difficult to make a covenant with an imaginary, fictional person, and it makes no sense for God to have done that (although it works in Greek mythology). Thus, the *Catechism* refers to Noah and the flood, and what is called the Noachic Covenant, nine times (nos. 56, 58, 71, 701, 845, 1080, 1094, 1219, 2569).

Noah is included in this same recitation of heroic faith, in Hebrews 11. Note how Abraham is mentioned in the next verse. There is no indication whatsoever that one was a real person and the other a mythical figure only:

Hebrews 11:7-8: By faith *Noah*, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, took heed and constructed an ark for the saving of his household; by this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness which comes by faith. By faith *Abraham* obeyed when he was called to go out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was to go.

St. Peter believed that Noah was a real person too (“God’s patience waited in the days of Noah”):

1 Peter 3:18-21: For Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit; in which he went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly did not obey, when God’s patience waited in the days of *Noah*, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you.

2 Peter 2:4-5, 9: For if God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of nether gloom to be kept until the judgment; if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved *Noah*, a herald of righteousness, with seven other persons, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly . . . then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trial, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment.

Again, the text moves from the fallen angels to Noah, and then to Lot (2 Pet. 2:7), who lived in the time of Abraham and was his nephew, to the time he was writing. St. Peter is arguing by analogy, stating, in effect: “God rescued Noah and Lot; He can and will do the same for you today.”

This makes absolutely no sense if the earlier people are imaginary, because the text would cite the real fallen angels (demons), then move to the supposedly imaginary Noah, then back to historical reality with Lot and the early Christians. This utterly violates the tenor and nature of the passage, as is the case in similar passages noted above.

I would urge people to stop attending studies “led” by people so

uninformed. “Blind guides” lead others astray. It is for very good reason that St. James warns:

James 3:1: Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, for you know that we who teach shall be judged with greater strictness.

Jesus' Use of Socratic Method

I consider myself Socratic in my dialogical method. I almost always go right to the premise and examine it to see if it can hold up. The ancient Greek philosopher Socrates (469-399 B. C.) probably influenced me more than any thinker besides C. S. Lewis, until I was introduced to Blessed John Henry Cardinal Newman's *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* in 1990, which is why my blog has *socrates* in its URL.

I've been mocked on several occasions (especially by certain anti-Catholics) for this love of Socrates and of dialogue. It can hardly be disputed that anyone (Christian or not) who studies philosophy or thinks logically at all is indebted to Socrates — one of the fathers of philosophy.

In a nutshell, the Socratic method is questioning an opponent in dialogue (or sometimes “turning the tables”), to see if what he believes can withstand scrutiny. Jesus and St. Paul did this all the time. Paul frequently disputed and argued with both Jews and Greeks, as the Bible informs us. Jesus questioned His hearers: often the Pharisees or Sadducees, who disbelieved in Him and in various theological or spiritual truths. Here are six examples of Jesus' using this method. Surely many more can be found:

Matthew 6:26-30: Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O men of little faith?

This is a series of four Socratic-type questions, illustrating the principle of God's provision by analogy. God feeds the birds, and flowers (without working at it) are beautiful, so why worry so much about food and clothing?

Matthew 12:10-11: And behold, there was a man with a withered hand.

And they asked him, “Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath?” so that they might accuse him. He said to them, “What man of you, if he has one sheep and it falls into a pit on the sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out?”

In this instance, Jesus asks a Socratic question and makes an accompanying *reductio ad absurdum*. He shows that the logical consequences of an extreme adherence to the law lead to the absurdity of a sheep being hurt or left to die simply because it is the sabbath day.

Matthew 21:23-27 (esp. 21:24): And when he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, and said, “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?” Jesus answered them, “I also will ask you a question; and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? From heaven or from men?” And they argued with one another, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ But if we say, ‘From men,’ we are afraid of the multitude; for all hold that John was a prophet.” So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.” And he said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.”

Here, Jesus showed the wrongness of their position through the question that He asked. In truth, John the Baptist was indeed a prophet from God, but they didn’t believe this; hence, they couldn’t answer His question, which “trapped” them.

Matthew 22:41-45 (esp. 22:42): Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, saying, “What do you think of the Christ? Whose son is he?” They said to him, “The son of David.” He said to them, “How is it then that David, inspired by the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, till I put thy enemies under thy feet’? If David thus calls him Lord, how is he his son?”

They reply to the Socratic question and then Jesus logically and theologically “traps” them by explaining the difficulty of their position (Matt. 22:43-45).

Luke 22:67-68: “If you are the Christ, tell us.” But he said to them, “If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I ask you [some versions: “a

question”], you will not answer.”

During His “trial” Jesus is being asked if He is the Messiah (*Christ* in Greek). In usual circumstances, He would, in reply, question His accusers or those who opposed His teachings (using the Socratic method). He implies that here but notes (in His omniscience) that they would not answer any such question from Him anyway.

John 10:31-36: The Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, “I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of these do you stone me?” The Jews answered him, “It is not for a good work that we stone you but for blasphemy; because you, being a man, make yourself God.” Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your law, ‘I said, you are gods’? If he called them gods to whom the word of God came (and scripture cannot be broken), do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?”

This is a brilliant series of three Socratic questions, all of which demonstrate the theological bankruptcy and incoherence of the denial of Jesus’ divinity.

Another Bible passage also describes the Socratic striving after knowledge (through questioning):

1 Corinthians 8:2: If any one imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. [Moffatt: Whoever imagines he has attained to some degree of knowledge, does not possess the true knowledge yet.]

The starting point for Socrates was to acknowledge that he did not know (relatively). He said: “What I do not know I do not think I know.” If we begin with that premise, we’ll always be able to learn more. It’s quite possible that St. Paul (being well acquainted with Greek philosophy) had something of the sort in his mind. He’s writing to the Corinthians, after all, who were very much cultural Greeks and thus heavily into philosophy.

Apologetics Isn't Saying You're Sorry for Your Faith!

It's mostly amusing, but sometimes annoying to be in a field of work that most people have never heard of. "You say you're *sorry* all the time?!" It's good to laugh at yourself.

But seriously, my "job title" originally came from the ancient Greek philosopher Plato and his book *The Apology*, which was about Socrates, another philosopher, vigorously defending himself against false charges of corruption at a trial in Athens (he wound up being sentenced to death).

That was the initial meaning of *apologia*, which is also a biblical word (more on that later). Through common usage it came to mean saying you're sorry. But even today, an effective apology often requires a good *explanation*, which goes back to the root meaning. The Christian (or, more specifically, Catholic) apologist is one who defends Christianity and demonstrates that Christianity is reasonable and credible. In practice, it usually means removing objections or "roadblocks" that trouble or confuse people. We apologists are sort of on the front lines between the Church and the opposing secular culture.

But apologetics is not merely "reactionary" in nature. It's a *positive* endeavor, to bolster the faith of Christians and make them more confident that faith is compatible with reason and solid thinking. We are to love God with our *mind* as well as with all our heart, soul, and strength, as Jesus said (Luke 10:27). If we know *why* we believe *what* we believe, we can more ably and enthusiastically share our Faith with others, as God and the Church call us to do.

The most famous Christian apologist is C. S. Lewis (1898-1963), of *Chronicles of Narnia* and *Shadowlands* (film biography) fame. He was an Anglican professor of English literature, who also wrote apologetics books. Like many of the most influential apologists, he was *not* formally trained in theology. This was also true of G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936), the most beloved and respected Catholic apologist, who was a journalist by trade and never attained a college degree.

Since apologetics is ideally mostly on a "popular" level, I think it's *good*

that many who are involved in it are not theologians writing to other scholars (as academics do). The idea is to educate the *masses*. It's more like being a combination of a preacher and a high school teacher (or maybe a private tutor) than being a college professor.

Many apologists are converts from Protestantism. This is good insofar as we converts understand Protestantism from the inside and can therefore more effectively argue against it where we believe it is in error and also point out the significant common ground with our separated brethren.

I'm very grateful for the many good and true things that I learned as an evangelical Protestant. I use them every day — especially the love for Sacred Scripture and the zeal for evangelism that evangelicals are known for. Converts believe that becoming a Catholic is not going from bad to good but, rather, going from very good Christianity to the *fullness* of Christianity.

Some of the more well-known Catholic apologists today are Scott Hahn, Karl Keating, Patrick Madrid, Jimmy Akin, and Steve Ray. It's a thriving field, with lots of great books, websites, radio shows, and conferences. One might say we are in an age of “apologetics revival.”

But unfortunately, many people view apologetics as by nature an arrogant, unsavory, “triumphalistic” activity — putting down others and quarreling endlessly with other Christians and non-Christians. It's not that at all (rightly understood). Yes, we contend for what we think is *most* true, but we can still respect what is true and good in other positions, held in good faith.

We defend positions that we honestly hold and wholeheartedly believe to be true. But at the same time we can *ecumenically* and happily acknowledge the many areas of common ground with other Christians and even other religions, while not compromising our own Catholic beliefs at all. These goals are entirely harmonious.

The classic apologetics Bible passage emphasizes the *spirit* in which we are to engage in it:

1 Peter 3:15: [B]ut in your hearts reverence Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to make a defense [*apologia*] to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence.

It has to be done in love, with humility, soaked in prayer. The apologist must always keep in mind that it's *God* who causes a person to become

convinced of the Catholic Faith or to become a committed disciple of Christ. It's *all* by God's grace and His power. The apologist is merely a *vessel*. That gets our eyes off ourselves. Any gift or ability that we have comes from God. As we used to say in the evangelical community, "evangelism is one beggar sharing what he has with another beggar."

Another related verse is Jude 3: "[C]ontend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." My favorite of all (what I've always sought to live by, as a model) is St. Paul's self-description:

1 Corinthians 9:19, 22-23: For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. . . . To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

God saves everyone who is saved, but He chooses to *involve* us in the process. Thus, Paul states that *he* could "save some." Since he often urges us to imitate him, that is our mandate to evangelize and "do apologetics." Obviously, folks have varying levels of ability to do so, and very few specialize in it, by vocation, but we are all called to share our faith in *some* fashion.

About the Author

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Dave Armstrong (who was received into the Catholic Church in 1991) has been a full-time Catholic apologist since December 2001. His blog, *Biblical Evidence for Catholicism*, has been online since February 1997, contains over 2,300 papers or web pages, and has been visited by 2.5 million visitors over the last eleven years. Sophia Institute Press has published six of Dave's forty-eight books: *A Biblical Defense of Catholicism* (2003; foreword by Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J.), *The Catholic Verses* (2004), *The One-Minute Apologist* (2007), *Bible Proofs for Catholic Truths* (2009), *The Quotable Newman* (2012), and the present volume. He has been happily married to his wife, Judy, since October 1984; they have three sons and a daughter and reside in southeast Michigan.

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**EXPLAINED
BY THE LIVES
AND LEGENDS
OF THE
SAINTS**

By Fr. F X. Schouppe, S.J.

PURGATORY

EXPLAINED BY THE LIVES
AND LEGENDS OF THE SAINTS

*"But I say unto you, that every idle
word that men shall speak, they shall
render an account for it in the day of
judgment.""* —Matthew 12:36

PURGATORY

EXPLAINED BY THE LIVES AND
LEGENDS OF THE SAINTS

by

FATHER F. X. SCHOUPPE, S. J.

Translated from the French

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

—2 Machabees 12:46

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PROTESTATION OF THE AUTHOR

In conformity to the decree of Urban VIII, *Sanctissimum*, of March 13, 1525, we declare that if in this work we have cited facts represented to be supernatural, nothing but a personal and private authority is to be attached to our opinion; the discernment of facts of this kind belongs to the supreme authority of the Church.

CANON XXX. SESSION VI. THE COUNCIL OF TRENT. JANUARY
13, 1547.

If anyone says that after the reception of the grace of justification the guilt is so remitted and the debt of eternal punishment so blotted out to every repentant sinner, that no debt of temporal punishment remains to be discharged, either in this world or in Purgatory, before the gates of Heaven can be opened, let him be anathema.

DECREE CONCERNING PURGATORY. THE COUNCIL OF TRENT.
SESSION XXV. DECEMBER 4, 1563.

Since the Catholic Church, instructed by the Holy Ghost, has, following the sacred writings and the ancient tradition of the Fathers, taught in sacred councils and very recently in this ecumenical council, that there is a Purgatory, and that the souls there detained are aided by the suffrages of the faithful and chiefly by the Acceptable Sacrifice of the Altar, the Holy Council commands the bishops that they strive diligently to the end that the sound doctrine of Purgatory, transmitted by the Fathers and sacred councils, be believed and maintained by the faithful of Christ, and be everywhere taught and preached.

CANONS CONCERNING THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE. THE
COUNCIL OF TRENT. SESSION XIV, NOVEMBER 25, 1551.

CANON 12. If anyone says that God always pardons the whole penalty together with the guilt and that the satisfaction of penitents is nothing else than the faith by which they perceive that Christ has satisfied for them, let him be anathema.

CANON 13. If anyone says that satisfaction for sins, as to their temporal punishment, is in no way made to God through the merits of Christ by the punishments inflicted by Him and patiently borne, or by those imposed by the priest, or even those voluntarily undertaken, as by fasts, prayers, almsgiving or other works of piety, and that therefore the best penance is merely a new life, let him be anathema.

CANON 14. If anyone says that the satisfactions by which penitents atone for their sins through Christ are not a worship of God but traditions of men, which obscure the doctrine of grace and the true worship of God and the beneficence itself of the death of Christ, let him be anathema.

CANON 15. If anyone says that the keys have been given to the Church only to loose and not also to bind, and that therefore priests, when imposing penalties on those who confess, act contrary to the purpose of the keys and to the institution of Christ, and that it is a fiction that there remains often a temporal punishment to be discharged after the eternal punishment has by virtue of the keys been removed, let him be anathema.

CHAPTER IX—ON THE WORKS OF SATISFACTION. SESSION
XIV. THE COUNCIL OF TRENT. NOVEMBER 25, 1551.

It [the Council] teaches furthermore that the liberality of the divine munificence is so great that we are able through Jesus Christ to make satisfaction to God the Father, not only by punishments voluntarily undertaken by ourselves to atone for sins, or by those imposed by the judgment of the priest according to the measure of our offense, but also, and this is the greatest proof of love, by the temporal afflictions imposed by God and borne patiently by us.

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PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

Of all the Catholic books the reader is likely to encounter, it is difficult to imagine one that will ever be more moving or that will influence him more than *Purgatory—Explained by the Lives and Legends of the Saints*, by Fr. F. X. Schouppe, S. J. Because of this fact the publishers have cooperated with another apostolate in issuing this inexpensive pocketbook edition, popularly priced and generously discounted, in the hopes that it will reach the widest possible readership.

For the doctrine of Purgatory sums up, from its own perspective, all of Catholic teaching. It puts us, especially through the agency of Fr. Schouppe's book, vitally in touch with the central issues of our Religion—the salvation of our souls and the means to attain this end.

A reading of this book should have three immediate and practical results: First, it will make us want to work to relieve the sufferings of the Poor Souls in Purgatory; second, it will inspire us to amend our own lives so that we do not have to go there; and third, it will motivate us to spread the knowledge about the truth of Purgatory to others, that they too will be motivated to pray for the Poor Souls and avoid Purgatory themselves. Actually, one of the greatest kindnesses we can perform for the Poor Souls is the spreading of this book, which is so effective in teaching about this holy doctrine.

As the author states in his preface, this book was composed to inflame the hearts of *faithful Catholics* with a tender care and continual solicitude for the Poor Souls. It is not a polemical work nor an apologetics on Purgatory, but an inspirational one, a book intended to increase the reader's knowledge, understanding and love.

Today, little mention is made of Purgatory, even in Catholic circles, with the result that many who profess to be Catholics no longer believe in this doctrine. This is the natural consequence of the relative scarcity of good Catholic literature on the subject. If people never read about Purgatory, and seldom hear it spoken of, they are naturally going to place less and less credence in it.

Nonetheless, it is natural for human beings to believe in Purgatory, for it is completely logical and just—even prescinding from the fact that it is a

Catholic teaching that comes down to us from the Apostles and is also found in Sacred Scripture. It may even come as a revelation to many Catholics today that *in order to be a Catholic one must believe in the existence of Purgatory*, for the existence of Purgatory is a dogma of the Church, and to be a Catholic requires that one adhere to *all* the teachings which the Church teaches as dogmatic.

It must be remembered that what any given person thinks or believes in relation to any specific teaching of Religion has nothing whatever to do with its truth. The truth is always the truth, no matter what anyone thinks or believes in its regard. That many today do not speak about or believe in Purgatory does not take away the reality. Purgatory exists, for the Church teaches that it exists, and it was Christ who taught this to the Church.

We know that the Protestant “reformers” of the 16th Century rejected the Church’s teaching on Purgatory, though, as Calvin admitted, it had always been a common belief. And though Father Schouppe does not mention her (apparently not being familiar with her revelations), the Venerable Anne Catherine Emmerich deposes frequently on the subject of Purgatory, among which revelations one of the saddest is that the souls of Protestants languish the longest and suffer the worst in Purgatory because they generally have so few friends and relatives to pray for them. “Protestants” who save their souls but who do not merit Heaven directly will find themselves in Purgatory, just like everyone else. The fact they did not believe in it will not relieve them at all of the necessity of going there. God’s truth is still *the* truth, no matter what we as individuals might believe about it.

Father Schouppe has divided this book into two principal sections: The Mystery of God’s Justice and The Mystery of God’s Mercy, in that order. The reader should be keenly aware of the fact that the first part of the book, roughly one-half, concentrates on God’s justice and consequently gives the general impression of severity. This is obviously done with a purpose. For the author wants to impress upon us the seriousness of everything we do and the strict account we will have to render for even the smallest act in our lives. With His holy justice seen in this light, scarcely a one could stand the judgment of Almighty God.

But there is also God’s mercy to be considered, and this is the principal focus of the second half of the book. Here the author gives not only many instances of God’s mercy being invoked and secured, but the various means we may employ to remit the temporal punishment due to sin—both for the

Poor Souls and for ourselves. The author insists that we should ever entertain a holy and wholesome fear of God's justice, but that it should always be tempered and counterbalanced by a powerful trust in God's mercy and the many means He has placed at our disposal to obtain the remission of temporal punishment due to sin. Temporal punishment due to sin, it will be remembered, is that spiritual debt that will keep us in Purgatory until remitted either by our own sufferings or someone else's prayers and good works on our behalf.

In the course of this inspiring book, the author covers virtually every aspect of the doctrine of Purgatory. The reader is bound to find fascinating revelations he or she may never have realized. For example, the author says the sufferings of Purgatory are basically of the same nature and intensity (depending on the severity of the punishment) as those of Hell. Yet, the Poor Souls do not wish to return to this world because they know that they are saved for sure since they are in Purgatory. Also, the duration of time there has no relationship to our experience of time in this world; even a few minutes to the Poor Souls can seem like years. Our suffrages or offerings for the dead are more agreeable to God than our prayers and good works for the living, for the Poor Souls are closer to God, stand in greater need, and cannot help themselves. The Poor Souls can pray for us while still in Purgatory, even though they cannot help themselves. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass which we cause to have offered for them is more efficacious than any other work or devotion we can do. Yet our almsgiving for them is more efficacious than either our prayer or fasting. And finally, all that we offer in charity for the Poor Souls is ultimately accounted to our own merit as well—to this end the author quotes St. John of God, who once traversed the streets of Granada proclaiming in a loud voice, "Give alms, my brethren, give alms for the love of yourselves!"

Fr. Schouppe quotes a disproportionate number of instances where religious, rather than lay people, have come back from Purgatory to make revelations about their sufferings. This is probably due to several facts: for example, the greater likelihood that such instances would be recorded and handed down by members of the deceased person's order; and the greater grace earned by religious, who spend their lives close to God and in His special work, and therefore have won the greater mercy from Him during their sufferings in Purgatory. But the author is quick to point out that appearances from the Poor Souls often are seen by seemingly "ordinary"

laymen and women as well, and that such appearances have occurred at all times and in many different places during Church history.

One of the best points scored by the author is the fact that we who are still among the Church Militant have a sacred *duty* to pray for and make sacrifices on behalf of the Poor Souls in Purgatory, for even the saints in Heaven, though they can aid the Poor Souls in their sufferings, still cannot gain for them indulgences, let alone plenary indulgences, as we can who are still on this earth.

Because so few people today understand the nature and value of indulgences and just how they may be gained—especially plenary indulgences—we have considered it wise to include as an appendix to this book a brief explanation of the Church’s teaching on the nature of indulgences and the method for gaining them. Indulgences constitute a spiritual treasure able so far to offset the justice of God in favor of His mercy that any one who believes in the Faith and diligently works to earn indulgences, especially plenary indulgences, should have nothing to fear from God’s justice when he dies, provided he diligently and continually try to amend his life. So prodigally liberal with her indulgences has been Holy Mother the Church that Blessed Mary of Quito (See [chapter 26](#)) “One day, rapt in ecstasy saw in the midst of a large space an immense table covered with heaps of silver, gold, rubies, pearls, and diamonds, and at the same time she heard a voice saying, ‘These riches are public property; each one may approach and take as much as he pleases.’ God made known to her that this was a symbol of indulgences.” Indulgences are spiritual riches free for the asking, riches which any believing Catholic who is in the state of grace can avail himself of for the relief of the Poor Souls or for the remission of the spiritual debts which he himself has incurred. If a person does not make use of these indulgences, it has to be one of the greatest wastes in the entire world.

Another important point to remember is the fact that prayers and sufferings offered to God during our life actually gain us merit, an increase in sanctifying grace, a higher degree of charity, closer union with God, and thus a higher degree of glory in Heaven for all eternity. But the sufferings of Purgatory, on the other hand, are useless as far as further advancement in holiness is concerned; they simply enable us to pay those debts which we should never have incurred in the first place. A Catholic who offers his prayers and sufferings to God during this life—the time for gaining merit—

will achieve two objectives with one effort: he will reduce his own debt of punishment for sin, and he will also advance in holiness and increase the degree of his future glory in Heaven.

To illustrate this point, Father Schouppe recounts the story of a deceased Spanish monk who appeared on earth four months after the death of King Philip II (1589); presumably many Masses and prayers had been offered throughout Spain for the repose of the King's soul. The monk reported that King Philip II was already in Heaven, but that the King's place there was as much lower than the monk's as the latter's place had been below King Philip's during their lives on earth.

Finally, Fr. Schouppe quotes St. Catherine of Genoa, who has given in her *Treatise on Purgatory* one of the finest revelations we have on the subject; and in this, passage we can sum up the spirit and insight of this present book: "He who purifies himself of his faults in this present life satisfies with a penny a debt of a thousand ducats (\$300,000); and he who waits until the other life to discharge his debts, consents to pay a thousand ducats for that which he might before have paid with a penny."

The choice is ours. Will we as ostriches with our spiritual heads in the sand ignore Christ's consoling doctrine on Purgatory, to the great detriment of our loved ones who may be languishing there, and meanwhile pile up for ourselves a staggering debt, which we shall certainly one day have to pay? Or shall we inform ourselves about the sufferings of Purgatory and resolve to free from those excruciating pains as many helpless Poor Souls as we possibly can, and heap up to ourselves thereby an overwhelming treasure of grace and attach to ourselves a great concourse of grateful souls who will pray for us in return, both in this life and during our own stay in Purgatory, if we should have to go there? Truly, the choice is ours! But a studious and pious reading of this book will surely sway the reader to the side of mercy for the Poor Souls, which, in the infinite mercy of God, will also redound to his own great spiritual benefit.

Publisher

April 30, 1986

Feast of St. Catherine of Siena

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

Object of the Work—To what Class of Readers it is Addressed—What we are Obligated to Believe, what we may Piously Believe, and what we are at Liberty not to Admit—Visions and Apparitions—Blind Credulity and Exaggerated Incredulity.

The Dogma of Purgatory is too much forgotten by the majority of the faithful; the Church Suffering, where they have so many brethren to succor, whither they foresee that they themselves must one day go, seems a strange land to them.

This truly deplorable forgetfulness was a great sorrow to St. Francis de Sales. “Alas!” said this pious doctor of the Church, “we do not sufficiently remember our dear departed; their memory seems to perish with the sound of the funeral bells.”

The principal causes of this are ignorance and lack of faith; our notions on the subject of Purgatory are too vague, our faith is too feeble.

In order, then, that our ideas may become more distinct and our faith enlivened, we must take a closer view of this life beyond the tomb, this intermediate state of the just souls, not yet worthy to enter the Heavenly Jerusalem.

This is the object of the present work: we propose not to prove the existence of Purgatory to skeptical minds, but to make it better known to the pious faithful who believe with a divine faith this dogma revealed of God. It is to them, properly speaking, that this book is addressed, to give them a less confused idea of Purgatory. I say purposely a *clearer* idea than people generally have, by placing this great truth in the strongest possible light.

To produce this effect we possess three very distinct sources of light: first, the dogmatic doctrine of the Church; then the doctrine as explained by the doctors of the Church; in the third place, the revelations and apparitions of the saints, which serve to confirm the teachings of the doctors.

1. The dogmatic doctrine of the Church on the subject of Purgatory comprises two articles, of which we shall speak later on. (See [chap. 3](#)). These two articles are of faith, and must be believed by every Catholic.

2. The teaching of the doctors and theologians, or rather their opinions on

several questions relative to Purgatory, and their explanations of them, are not imposed as articles of faith; we are free to reject them without ceasing to be Catholic. Nevertheless, it would be imprudent, and even rash, to reject them, and it is the spirit of the Church to follow the opinions commonly held by the doctors.

3. The revelations of the saints, called also *particular* revelations, do not belong to the deposit of faith confided by Jesus Christ to His Church; they are historical facts, based upon human testimony. It is permitted to believe them, and piety finds wholesome food in them. We may, however, disbelieve them without sinning against faith; but they are authenticated, and we cannot reject them without offending against reason; because sound reason demands that all men should give assent to truth when it is sufficiently demonstrated.

To illustrate this subject more clearly, let us, in the first place, explain the nature of the revelations of which we speak.

Particular revelations are of two kinds: the one consists in visions, the other in apparitions. They are called *particular*, because they differ from those found in Holy Scripture, not forming part of the doctrine revealed for mankind, and not being proposed by the Church to our belief as dogmas of faith.

Visions, properly so called, are subjective lights, infused by God into the understanding of His creatures, in order to discover to them His mysteries. Such are the visions of the prophets, those of St. Paul, of St. Bridget, and many other saints. These visions usually take place when the subject is in a state of ecstasy; they consist in certain mysterious representations, which appear to the eyes of the soul, and which must not always be taken literally. Frequently they are figures, symbolic images, which represent in a manner proportionate to the capacity of our understanding, things purely spiritual, of which ordinary language is incapable of conveying an idea.

Apparitions, at least frequently, are objective phenomena which have a real exterior object. Such was the apparition of Moses and Elias on Mount Thabor; that of Samuel evoked by the Witch of Endor; that of the Angel Raphael to Tobias; those of many other angels; in fine, such are the apparitions of the souls in Purgatory.

That the spirits of the dead sometimes appear to the living is a fact that cannot be denied. Does not the Gospel clearly suppose it? When the risen Jesus appeared for the first time to His assembled apostles, *they supposed they saw a spirit*. Our Saviour, far from saying that spirits appear not, spoke

to them thus: *Why are you troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; handle and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see Me to have.* (Luke 24:37, etc.).

Apparitions of the souls that are in Purgatory are of frequent occurrence. We find them in great numbers in the “Lives of the Saints”; they happen sometimes to the ordinary faithful. We have collected those which appear best qualified to instruct or to edify, and we now present them to the reader. But, it may be asked, are all these facts historically certain? We have selected the best authenticated.¹ If, among the number, the reader finds any which he thinks could not stand the rigor of criticism, he need not admit them. In order to avoid an excessive severity, one which is akin to incredulity, it is good to remark that, generally speaking, apparitions of souls occur, and that they frequently occur cannot be doubted. “Apparitions of this kind,” says the Abbé Ribet, “are not uncommon. God permits them for the relief of souls in order to excite our compassion, and also to make us sensible of how terrible are the rigors of His Justice against those faults which we consider trivial.” (*La Mystique Divine, distinguée des Contrefaçons Diaboliques et des Analogies Humaines*. Paris, Poussielgue). St. Gregory in his *Dialogues* cites several examples, of which, it is true, we may dispute the full authenticity; but which, in the mouth of this holy doctor, prove at least that he believed in the possibility of the existence of these phenomena. A great number of other authors, not less reliable than St. Gregory, both on account of sanctity and learning, relate similar instances. Moreover, incidents of this sort abound in the lives of the saints. To be convinced of this, it suffices to peruse the *Acta Sanctorum*.

The Church Suffering has ever implored the suffrages of the Church Militant; and this intercourse, bearing the impress of sadness, yet also full of instruction, is for the one a source of inexhaustible relief, and for the other a powerful incitement to sanctity.

The vision of Purgatory has been granted to many holy souls. St. Catherine de Ricci descended in spirit into Purgatory every Sunday night; St. Lidwina, during her raptures, penetrated into this place of expiation, and, conducted by her angel guardian, visited the souls in their torments. In like manner, an angel led Blessed Osanne of Mantua through this dismal abyss.

Blessed Veronica of Binasco, St. Frances of Rome, and many others had visions exactly similar, with impressions of terror.

More frequently it is the souls themselves that appear to the living and

implore their intercession. Many appeared in this manner to Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque, and to a great number of other holy persons. The souls departed frequently besought the intercession of Denis the Carthusian. This great servant of God was one day asked how many times the holy souls appeared to him. "Oh! hundreds of times," he replied.

St. Catherine of Siena, in order to spare her father the pains of Purgatory, offered herself to the Divine Justice to suffer in his stead during her whole life. God accepted her offer, inflicted the most excruciating torments upon her, which lasted until her death, and admitted the soul of her father into eternal glory. In return this blessed soul frequently appeared to his daughter to thank her, and to make to her many useful revelations.

When the souls in Purgatory appear to the living, they always present themselves in an attitude which excites compassion; now with the features which they had during life or at their death, with a sad countenance and imploring looks, in garments of mourning, with an expression of extreme suffering; then like a mist, a light, a shadow, or some kind of fantastic figure, accompanied by a sign or word by which they may be recognized. At other times they betray their presence by moans, sobs, sighs, or hurried respiration and plaintive accents. They often appear enveloped in flames. When they speak, it is to manifest their sufferings, to deplore their past faults, to ask suffrages, or even to address reproaches to those who ought to succor them. Another kind of revelation, adds the same author, is made by invisible blows which the living receive, by the violent shutting of doors, the rattling of chains, and the sounds of voices.

These facts are too multiplied to admit of doubt; the only difficulty is to establish their connection with the world of expiation. But when these manifestations coincide with the death of persons dear to us, when they cease after prayers and reparations have been made to God in their behalf, is it not reasonable to see therein signs by which the souls make known their distress?

In the various phenomena to which we have just drawn attention we recognize the souls in Purgatory. But there is a case when the apparition should be held in suspicion; it is when a notorious sinner, unexpectedly carried away by a sudden death, comes to implore the prayers of the living that he may be delivered from Purgatory. The devil is interested in making us believe that we can live in the greatest disorders until the moment of our death and yet escape Hell. However, even in such instances, it is not

forbidden to think that the soul which appears has repented, and that it is in the temporary flames of expiation; nor, consequently, is it forbidden to pray for it, but it is proper to observe the greatest caution in regard to visions of this kind, and the credit which we give to them. (Ribet, *Mystique Divine*, vol. 2, chap. 10).

The details into which we have entered suffice to justify in the eyes of the reader the quotation of facts which he will find in the course of this work.

Let us add that the Christian must guard against too great incredulity in supernatural facts connected with dogmas of faith. St. Paul tells us that *Charity believeth all things* (1 Cor. 13:7), that is to say, as interpreters explain it, all that which we may prudently believe, and of which the belief will not be prejudicial. If it is true that prudence rejects a blind and superstitious credulity, it is also true that we must avoid another extreme, that with which our Saviour reproached the Apostle St. Thomas. *You believe*, He said to him, *because you have seen and touched*; it were better to have believed the testimony of your brethren. In exacting more, you have been guilty of incredulity; this is a fault that all My disciples should avoid. *Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed. Be not faithless, but believing.* (John 20:27, 29).

The theologian who expounds dogmas of faith must be severe in the choice of his proofs; the historian must proceed with rigorous circumspection in the narration of facts, but the ascetic writer, who cites examples to illustrate truths and edify the faithful, is not held to this strict rigor. The best authorized persons in the Church, such as St. Gregory, St. Bernard, St. Francis de Sales, St. Alphonsus Liguori, Bellarmine, and many others, as much distinguished for their learning as for their piety, when writing their excellent works knew nothing of the fastidious requirements of the present day—requirements which in nowise constitute progress.

In fact, if the spirit of our fathers in the faith was more simple, what is the cause of the disappearance of that ancient simplicity in the present time? Is it not the Protestant Rationalism with which, in our day, so many of our Catholics are infected? Is it not the spirit of reasoning and criticism that emanated from the Lutheran Reformation, propagated by French Philosophism, which, leading them to consider the things of God from a purely human point of view, makes them cold, and alienates them from the Spirit of God? The Venerable Louis of Blois, speaking of the *Revelations of St. Gertrude*, says: “This book contains treasures. Proud and carnal men,” he

adds, “who understand nothing of the Spirit of God, treat as reveries the writings of the holy virgin Gertrude, of St. Mechtilde, St. Hildegarde, and others; it is because they are ignorant of the familiarity with which God communicates Himself to humble, simple, and loving souls, and how in these intimate communications He is pleased to illumine these souls with the pure light of truth, without any shadow of error.” (Louis of Blois, *Epist. ad Florentium*).

These words of Louis of Blois are serious. We did not wish to incur the reproach of this great master in the spiritual life, and, whilst avoiding a blameworthy credulity, we have collected with a certain kind of liberty those which seem to us at once the best authenticated and the most instructive. May they increase in those who read them devotion towards the faithful departed. May they profoundly inspire all who read them with a holy and salutary fear of Purgatory.

- ¹. It is from the lives of the saints, honored as such by the Church, and other illustrious servants of God, that we have taken the greater part of the examples herein cited. The reader who wishes to investigate these facts, in order to give them their just value, may without difficulty have recourse to the originals by the aid of our references. If the incident is drawn from the life of a saint, we indicate the day on which his name is entered in the martyrology, which is sufficient for consulting the *Acta Sanctorum*. If we mention any venerable personage, such as Father Joseph Anchieta, Apostle and Thaumaturgus of Brazil, whose life is not inserted in the volumes of the Bollandists, they must then have recourse to biographies and particular histories. For the examples borrowed from Father Rossignoli, *Merveilles Divine dans les Ames du Purgatoire* (trans. Postel; Tournai, Casterman), we content ourselves by marking the number of the *Merveille*, because the author has there indicated one or more sources whence he himself has drawn.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

The author of this work is the well-known writer, Rev. Father F. X. Schouppe, of the Society of Jesus. The reverend author scarcely needs any introduction to English readers, as several of his valuable works have been already translated from French into English. To the reverend clergy the author is best known through his works on Dogmatic Theology and Sacred Scripture, which, in the judgment of competent critics, possess the very highest order of merit. In this work on Purgatory they will find the same fullness and solidity of thought and judgment, joined with wonderful clearness and simplicity of diction, which distinguish the above works. We are confident that the reverend clergy will hail with delight the appearance of this work in an English garb, and will give it their esteemed encouragement.

A profound theologian and Scriptural scholar, acquainted as only very few are with the writings of the Fathers, the author was specially equipped for writing a work of this kind. A faithful and devoted son of the Church, his works are ever guided by a Catholic instinct, which keeps them in harmony with Catholic faith and Catholic practice.

The subject of this book is at once dear and interesting to every Catholic heart. About the existence of this intermediate state Catholics have no more doubt than of the existence of Heaven or Hell. The Church, by her authoritative teaching, has decided the matter for all time. "The Catholic Church," says the Council of Trent, "instructed by the Holy Ghost, has, from the sacred writings and the ancient tradition of the Fathers, taught in sacred councils, and very recently in the Ecumenical Synod, that there is a Purgatory, and that the souls there detained are helped by the suffrages of the faithful, but principally by the acceptable Sacrifice of the Altar." (Sess. 25).

The pious reader cannot fail to have his faith nourished and strengthened after reading a chapter of this book; and realizing how much help and comfort he can bring to the poor souls, his charity will prompt him to come to their assistance and rescue. Their cries, wafted hither on the wings of faith from the shore of eternity, will not appeal to him in vain. A new interest will spring up within him for that realm of pain yet also of hope, where those not wholly pure are cleansed and prepared for everlasting joys.

This work has been translated into English at the earnest request of the author. Wishing that devotion for the holy souls might grow and flourish in many hearts, he considered that his purpose would be best attained by having this work translated into English, for the benefit of English-speaking readers. It may also interest the readers of this book to know that the learned author is at present laboring for the salvation of souls among the pagan people of India.

The translator has specially aimed at giving the exact sense of the author, without any attempt at style or literary finish. Such an attempt, she believes, would detract from the value of the work as a whole.

For the rest, should this work contribute even in a small measure to the greater glory of God and of Holy Church; should it make the doctrine of Purgatory better understood; should it convince its readers of the excellence of devotion for the holy souls, and inspire at least some of them with a holy zeal to practice it, then indeed would the ambition of the author and translator be realized.

J. J. S.

Part One

Purgatory, The Mystery of God's Justice

Chapter 1

Purgatory in the Divine Plan.

PURGATORY occupies an important place in our holy religion: it forms one of the principal parts of the work of Jesus Christ, and plays an essential *rôle* in the economy of the salvation of man.

Let us call to mind that the Holy Church of God, considered as a whole, is composed of three parts: The Church Militant, the Church Triumphant, and the Church Suffering or *Purgatory*. This triple Church constitutes the mystical body of Jesus Christ, and the souls in Purgatory are no less His members than are the faithful upon earth and the elect in Heaven. In the Gospel, the Church is ordinarily called the *Kingdom of Heaven*; now Purgatory, just as the heavenly and terrestrial Church, is a province of this vast kingdom.

The three sister Churches have incessant relations with each other, a continual communication which we call the *Communion of Saints*. These relations have no other object than to conduct souls to eternal glory, the final term to which all the elect tend. The three Churches mutually assist in peopling Heaven, which is the permanent city, the glorious Jerusalem.

What then is the work which we, members of the Church Militant, have to do for the souls in Purgatory? We have to alleviate their sufferings. God has placed in our hands the key of this mysterious prison: it is *prayer for the dead*, devotion to the souls in Purgatory.

Chapter 2

Prayer for the Dead—Fear and Confidence.

P RAYER for the departed, sacrifices, and suffrages for the dead form a part of Christian worship, and devotion towards the souls in Purgatory is a devotion which the Holy Ghost infuses with charity into the hearts of the faithful. *It is a holy and wholesome thought, says Holy Scripture, to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins. (2 Mach. 12:46).*

In order to be perfect, devotion to the souls in Purgatory must be animated both by a spirit of fear and a spirit of confidence. On the one hand, the Sanctity of God and His Justice inspires us with a salutary fear; on the other, His infinite Mercy gives us boundless confidence.

God is Sanctity itself, much more so than the sun is light, and no shadow of sin can endure before His face. *Thine eyes are pure, says the prophet, and thou canst not look on iniquity. (Hab. 1:13).* When iniquity manifests itself in creatures, the Sanctity of God exacts expiation, and when this expiation is made in all the rigor of justice, it is terrible. It is for this reason that the Scripture says again, *Holy and terrible is His name (Ps. 110)*; as though it would say, His Justice is terrible because His Sanctity is infinite.

The Justice of God is terrible, and it punishes with extreme rigor even the most trivial faults. The reason is that these faults, light in our eyes, are in nowise so before God. The least sin displeases Him infinitely, and, on account of the infinite Sanctity which is offended, the slightest transgression assumes enormous proportions, and demands enormous atonement. This explains the terrible severity of the pains of the other life, and should penetrate us with a holy fear.

This fear of Purgatory is a salutary fear; its effect is not only to animate us with a charitable compassion towards the poor suffering souls, but also with a vigilant zeal for our own spiritual welfare. Think of the fire of Purgatory, and you will endeavor to avoid the least faults; think of the fire of Purgatory, and you will practice penance, that you may satisfy Divine Justice in this world rather than in the next.

Let us, however, guard against excessive fear, and not lose confidence.

Let us not forget the Mercy of God, which is not less infinite than His Justice. *Thy mercy, Lord, is great above the Heavens*, says the prophet (Ps. 107); and elsewhere, *The Lord is gracious and merciful: patient, and plenteous in mercy*. (Ps. 144). This ineffable mercy should calm the most lively apprehensions, and fill us with a holy confidence, according to the words, *In te, Domine, speravi, non confundar in æternum*—"In Thee, O Lord, I have hoped; let me never be put to confusion." (Ps. 70).

If we are animated with this double sentiment, if our confidence in God's Mercy is equal to the fear with which His Justice inspires us, we shall have the true spirit of devotion to the souls in Purgatory.

This double sentiment springs naturally from the dogma of Purgatory rightly understood—a dogma which contains the double mystery of Justice and Mercy: of Justice which punishes, of Mercy which pardons. It is from this double point of view that we are about to consider Purgatory and illustrate its doctrine.

Chapter 3

The Word Purgatory—Catholic Doctrine—Council of Trent— Controverted Questions.

THE word *Purgatory* is sometimes taken to mean a place, sometimes as an intermediate state between Hell and Heaven. It is, properly speaking, *the condition of souls* which, at the moment of death, are in the state of grace, but which have not completely expiated their faults, nor attained the degree of purity necessary to enjoy the vision of God.

Purgatory is, then, a transitory state which terminates in a life of everlasting happiness. It is not a trial by which merit may be gained or lost, but a state of atonement and expiation. The soul has arrived at the term of its earthly career; that life was a time of trial, a time of merit for the soul, a time of mercy on the part of God. This time once expired, nothing but justice is to be expected from God, whilst the soul can neither gain nor lose merit. She remains in the state in which death found her; and since it found her in the state of sanctifying grace, she is certain of never forfeiting that happy state, and of arriving at the eternal possession of God. Nevertheless, since she is burdened with certain debts of temporal punishment, she must satisfy Divine Justice by enduring this punishment in all its rigor.

Such is the signification of the word *Purgatory*, and the condition of the souls which are there.

On this subject the Church proposes *two truths clearly* defined as dogmas of faith: first, *that there is a Purgatory*; second, *that the souls which are in Purgatory may be assisted by the suffrages of the faithful, especially by the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass*.

Besides these two dogmatic points, there are several doctrinal questions which the Church has not decided, and which are more or less clearly solved by the Doctors. These questions relate 1) to the location of Purgatory; 2) to the nature of the sufferings; 3) to the number and condition of the souls which are in Purgatory; 4) to the certainty which they have of their beatitude; 5) to the duration of their sufferings; 6) to the intervention of the living in their behalf, and the application of the suffrages of the Church.

Chapter 4

Location of Purgatory—Doctrine of Theologians—Catechism of the Council of Trent—St. Thomas.

ALTHOUGH faith tells us nothing definite regarding the location of Purgatory, the most common opinion, that which most accords with the language of Scripture, and which is the most generally received among theologians, places it in the bowels of the earth, not far from the Hell of the reprobates. Theologians are almost unanimous, says Bellarmine, in teaching that Purgatory, at least the *ordinary* place of expiation, is situated in the interior of the earth, that the souls in Purgatory and the reprobate are in the same subterranean space in the deep abyss which the Scripture calls *Hell*. (*Catech. Rom.*, chap. 6, § 1).

When we say in the Apostles' Creed that after His death *Jesus Christ descended into Hell*, the name Hell, says the Catechism of the Council of Trent, signifies those hidden places where the souls are detained which have not yet reached eternal beatitude. But these prisons are of different kinds. One is a dark and gloomy dungeon, where the damned are continually tormented by evil spirits, and by a fire which is never extinguished. This place, which is Hell properly so called, is also named *Gehenna* and abyss.

There is another Hell, which contains the fire of Purgatory. There the souls of the just suffer for a certain time, that they may become entirely purified before being admitted into their heavenly fatherland, where nothing defiled can ever enter.

A third Hell was that into which the souls of the saints who died before the coming of Jesus Christ were received, and in which they enjoyed peaceful repose, exempt from pain, consoled and sustained by the hope of their redemption. They were those holy souls which awaited Jesus Christ in Abraham's bosom, and which were delivered when Christ descended into Hell. Our Saviour suddenly diffused among them a brilliant light, which filled them with infinite joy, and gave them sovereign beatitude, which is the vision of God. Then was fulfilled the promise of Jesus to the good thief: *This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise*.

“A very probable opinion,” says St. Thomas, “and one which, moreover, corresponds with the words of the saints in particular revelation, is that Purgatory has a double place for expiation. The first will be destined for the generality of souls, and is situated below, near to Hell; the second will be for particular cases, and it is from thence that so many apparitions occur.” (Suppl., part. 3, ques. ult.).

The holy Doctor admits, then, like so many others who share his opinions, that sometimes Divine Justice assigns a special place of purification to certain souls, and even permits them to appear either to instruct the living or to procure for the departed the suffrages of which they stand in need; sometimes also for other motives worthy of the wisdom and mercy of God.

Such is the general view concerning the location of Purgatory. Since we are not writing a controversial treatise, we add neither proofs nor refutations; these can be seen in authors such as Suarez and Bellarmine. We will content ourselves by remarking that the opinion concerning a subterranean Hell has nothing to fear from modern science. A science purely natural is incompetent in questions which belong, as does this one, to the supernatural order. Moreover, we know that spirits may be in a place occupied by bodies, as though these bodies did not exist. Whatever, then, the interior of the earth may be, whether it be entirely of fire, as geologists commonly say, or whether it be in any other state, there is nothing to prevent its serving as a sojourn of spirits, even of spirits clothed with a risen body. The Apostle St. Paul teaches us that the air is filled with a multitude of evil spirits: *We have to combat*, says he, *against the spirits of wickedness in the high places.* (Eph. 6:12).

On the other hand, we know that the good angels who protect us are no less numerous in the world. Now, if angels and other spirits can inhabit our atmosphere, whilst the physical world is not in the least degree changed, why cannot the souls of the dead dwell in the bosom of the earth?

Chapter 5

Location of Purgatory—Revelations of the Saints—St. Teresa —St. Louis Bertrand—St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi.

ST. TERESA had great charity towards the souls in Purgatory, and assisted them as much as lay in her power by her prayers and good works. In recompense, God frequently showed her the souls she had delivered; she saw them at the moment of their release from suffering and of their entrance into Heaven. Now, they generally came forth from the bosom of the earth. "*I received tidings,*" she writes, "of the death of a Religious who had formerly been Provincial of that province, and afterwards of another. I was acquainted with him, and he had rendered me great service. This intelligence caused me great uneasiness. Although this man was commendable for many virtues, I was apprehensive for the salvation of his soul, because he had been Superior for the space of twenty years, and I always fear much for those who are charged with the care of souls. Much grieved, I went to an oratory; there I conjured our Divine Lord to apply to this Religious the little good I had done during my life, and to supply the rest by His infinite merits, in order that this soul might be freed from Purgatory.

"Whilst I besought this grace with all the fervor of which I was capable, I saw on my right side this soul come forth from the depths of the earth and ascend into Heaven in transports of joy. Although this priest was advanced in years, he appeared to me with the features of a man who had not yet attained the age of thirty, and with a countenance resplendent with light.

"This vision, though very short, left me inundated with joy, and without a shadow of doubt as to the truth of what I had seen. As I was separated by a great distance from the place where this servant of God had ended his days, it was some time before I learned the particulars of his edifying death; all those who were witnesses of it could not behold without admiration how he preserved consciousness to the last moment, the tears he shed, and the sentiments of humility with which he surrendered his soul to God.

"A Religious of my community, a great servant of God, had been dead not quite two days. We were saying the Office for the Dead for her in choir,

a sister was reading the lesson, and I was standing to say the versicle. When half of the lesson had been said, I saw the soul of this Religious come forth from the depths of the earth, like the one of which I have just spoken, and go to Heaven.

“In this same monastery there died, at the age of eighteen or twenty years, another Religious, a true model of fervor, regularity, and virtue. Her life had been but a tissue of maladies and sufferings patiently endured. I had no doubt, after having seen her live thus, that she had more than sufficient merits to exempt her from Purgatory. Nevertheless, whilst I was at Office, before she was interred, and about a quarter of an hour after her death, I saw her soul likewise issue from the earth and rise to Heaven.” Behold what St. Teresa writes.

A like instance is recorded in the Life of St. Louis Bertrand, of the Order of St. Dominic. This Life, written by Father Antist, a Religious of the same Order, and who lived with the saint, is inserted in the *Acta Sanctorum* on the 10th of October. In the year 1557, whilst St. Louis Bertrand resided at the convent of Valentia, the pest broke out in that city. The terrible plague spread rapidly, threatening to exterminate the inhabitants, and each one trembled for his life. A Religious of the community, wishing to prepare himself fervently for death, made a general Confession of his whole life to the saint; and on leaving him said, “Father, if it should now please God to call me, I shall return and make known to you my condition in the other life.” He died a short time afterwards, and the following night he appeared to the saint. He told him that he was detained in Purgatory on account of a few slight faults which remained to be expiated, and begged the saint to recommend him to the community. St. Louis communicated the request immediately to the Prior, who hastened to recommend the soul of the departed to the prayers and Holy Sacrifices of the brethren assembled in chapter.

Six days later, a man of the town, who knew nothing of what had passed at the convent, came to make his Confession to Father Louis, and told him “that the soul of Father Clement had appeared to him. He saw, he said, the earth open, and the soul of the deceased Father come forth all glorious; it resembled, he added, a resplendent star, which rose through the air towards Heaven.”

We read in the Life of St. Magdalen de Pazzi, written by her confessor, Father Cepari, of the Company of Jesus, that this servant of God was made

witness of the deliverance of a soul under the following circumstances: One of her sisters in religion had died some time previous, when the saint being one day in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, saw issue from the earth the soul of that sister, still captive in the dungeons of Purgatory. She was enveloped in a mantle of flames, under which a robe of dazzling whiteness protected her from the fierce heat of the fire; and she remained an entire hour at the foot of the altar, adoring in inexpressible annihilation the hidden God of the Eucharist.

This hour of adoration, which Magdalen saw her perform, was the last of her penance; that hour passed, she arose and took her flight to Heaven.

Chapter 6

Location of Purgatory—St. Frances of Rome—St. Magdalen de Pazzi.

IT has pleased God to show in spirit the gloomy abodes of Purgatory to some privileged souls, who were to reveal the sorrowful mysteries thereof for the edification of the faithful. Of this number was the illustrious St. Frances, foundress of the Oblates, who died in Rome in 1440. God favored her with great lights concerning the state of souls in the other life. She saw Hell and its horrible torments; she saw also the interior of Purgatory, and the mysterious order—I had almost said hierarchy of expiations—which reigns in this portion of the Church of Jesus Christ.

In obedience to her superiors, who thought themselves bound to impose this obligation upon her, she made known all that God had manifested to her; and her visions, written at the request of the venerable Canon Matteotti, her spiritual director, have all the authenticity that can be desired in such matters. Now, the servant of God declared that, after having endured with unspeakable horror the vision of Hell, she came out of that abyss and was conducted by her celestial guide into the regions of Purgatory. There reigned neither horror nor disorder, nor despair nor eternal darkness; there divine hope diffused its light, and she was told that this place of purification was called also *sojourn of hope*. She saw there souls which suffered cruelly, but angels visited and assisted them in their sufferings.

Purgatory, she said, is divided into three distinct parts, which are as the three large provinces of that kingdom of suffering. They are situated the one beneath the other, and occupied by souls of different orders. These souls are buried more deeply in proportion as they are more defiled and farther removed from the time of their deliverance.

The lowest region is filled with a fierce fire, but which is not dark like that of Hell; it is a vast burning sea, throwing forth immense flames. Innumerable souls are plunged into its depths: they are those who have rendered themselves guilty of mortal sin, which they have duly confessed, but not sufficiently expiated during life. The servant of God then learned

that, for all forgiven mortal sin, there remains to be undergone a suffering of seven years. This term cannot evidently be taken to mean a definite measure, since mortal sins differ in enormity, but as an average penalty. Although the souls are enveloped in the same flames, their sufferings are not the same; they differ according to the number and nature of their former sins.

In this lower Purgatory the saint beheld laics and persons consecrated to God. The laics were those who, after a life of sin, had had the happiness of being sincerely converted; the persons consecrated to God were those who had not lived according to the sanctity of their state. At that same moment she saw descend the soul of a priest whom she knew, but whose name she does not reveal. She remarked that he had his face covered with a veil which concealed a stain. Although he had led an edifying life, this priest had not always observed strict temperance, and had sought too eagerly the satisfactions of the table.

The saint was then conducted into the intermediate Purgatory, destined for souls which had deserved less rigorous chastisement. It had three distinct compartments; one resembled an immense dungeon of ice, the cold of which was indescribably intense; the second, on the contrary, was like a huge caldron of boiling oil and pitch; the third had the appearance of a pond of liquid metal resembling molten gold or silver.

The upper Purgatory, which the saint does not describe, is the temporary abode of souls which suffer little, except the pain of loss, and approach the happy moment of their deliverance.

Such, in substance, is the vision of St. Frances relative to Purgatory.

The following is an account of that of St. Magdalen de Pazzi, a Florentine Carmelite, as it is related in her Life by Father Cepari. It gives more of a picture of Purgatory, whilst the preceding vision but traces its outlines.

Some time before her death, which took place in 1607, the servant of God, Magdalen de Pazzi, being one evening with several other Religious in the garden of the convent, was ravished in ecstasy, and saw Purgatory open before her. At the same time, as she made known later, a voice invited her to visit all the prisons of Divine Justice, and to see how truly worthy of compassion are the souls detained there.

At this moment she was heard to say, "Yes I will go." She consented to undertake this painful journey. In fact, she walked for two hours round the garden, which was very large, pausing from time to time. Each time she

interrupted her walk, she contemplated attentively the sufferings which were shown to her. She was then seen to wring her hands in compassion, her face became pale, her body bent under the weight of suffering, in presence of the terrible spectacle with which she was confronted.

She began to cry aloud in lamentation, "Mercy, my God, mercy! Descend, O Precious Blood, and deliver these souls from their prison. Poor souls! you suffer so cruelly, and yet you are content and cheerful. The dungeons of the martyrs in comparison with these were gardens of delight. Nevertheless there are others still deeper. How happy should I esteem myself were I not obliged to go down into them."

She did descend, however, for she was forced to continue her way. But when she had taken a few steps, she stopped terror-stricken, and, sighing deeply, she cried, "What! Religious also in this dismal abode! Good God! how they are tormented! Ah, Lord!" She does not explain the nature of their sufferings; but the horror which she manifested in contemplating them caused her to sigh at each step. She passed from thence into less gloomy places. They were the dungeons of simple souls, and of children in whom ignorance and lack of reason extenuated many faults. Their torments appeared to her much more endurable than those of the others. Nothing but ice and fire were there. She noticed that these souls had their angel guardians with them, who fortified them greatly by their presence; but she saw also demons whose dreadful forms increased their sufferings.

Advancing a few paces, she saw souls still more unfortunate, and she was heard to cry out, "Oh! how horrible is this place; it is full of hideous demons and incredible torments! Who, O my God, are the victims of these cruel tortures? Alas! they are being pierced with sharp swords, they are being cut into pieces." She was answered that they were the souls whose conduct had been tainted with hypocrisy.

Advancing a little, she saw a great multitude of souls which were bruised, as it were, and crushed under a press; and she understood that they were those souls which had been addicted to impatience and disobedience during life. Whilst contemplating them, her looks, her sighs, her whole attitude betokened compassion and terror.

A moment later her agitation increased, and she uttered a dreadful cry. It was the dungeon of lies which now lay open before her. After having attentively considered it, she cried aloud, "Liars are confined in a place in the vicinity of Hell, and their sufferings are exceedingly great. Molten lead is

poured into their mouths; I see them burn, and at the same time tremble with cold.”

She then went to the prison of those souls which had sinned through weakness, and she was heard to exclaim, “Alas! I had thought to find you among those who have sinned through ignorance, but I am mistaken; you burn with an intenser fire.”

Farther on, she perceived souls which had been too much attached to the goods of this world, and had sinned by avarice.

“What blindness,” said she, “thus eagerly to seek a perishable fortune! Those whom formerly riches could not sufficiently satiate, are here gorged with torments. They are smelted like metal in the furnace.”

From thence she passed into the place where those souls were imprisoned which had formerly been stained with impurity. She saw them in so filthy and pestilential a dungeon that the sight produced nausea. She turned away quickly from that loathsome spectacle. Seeing the ambitious and the proud, she said, “Behold those who wished to shine before men; now they are condemned to live in this frightful obscurity.”

Then she was shown those souls which had been guilty of ingratitude towards God. They were a prey to unutterable torments, and, as it were, drowned in a lake of molten lead, for having by their ingratitude dried up the source of piety.

Finally, in a last dungeon, she was shown souls that had not been given to any particular vice, but which, through lack of proper vigilance over themselves, had committed all kinds of trivial faults. She remarked that these souls had a share in the chastisements of all vices, in a moderate degree, because those faults committed only from time to time rendered them less guilty than those committed through habit.

After this last station the saint left the garden, begging God never again to make her witness of so heartrending a spectacle: she felt that she had not strength to endure it. Her ecstasy still continued, and, conversing with Jesus, she said to Him, “Tell me, Lord, what was Your design in discovering to me those terrible prisons, of which I knew so little, and comprehended still less? Ah! I now see; You wished to give me the knowledge of Your infinite sanctity, and to make me detest more and more the least stain of sin, which is so abominable in Your eyes.”

Chapter 7

Location of Purgatory—St. Lidwina of Schiedam.

LET us narrate a third vision relating to the interior of Purgatory, that of St. Lidwina of Schiedam, who died April 11, 1433, and whose history, written by a contemporary priest, has the most perfect authenticity. This admirable virgin, a true prodigy of Christian patience, was a prey to all the pains of the most cruel maladies for the period of thirty-eight years. Her sufferings rendering sleep impossible to her, she passed long nights in prayer, and then, frequently wrapt in spirit, she was conducted by her angel guardian into the mysterious regions of Purgatory. There she saw dwellings, prisons, divers dungeons, one more dismal than the other; she met, too, souls that she knew, and she was shown their various punishments.

It may be asked, “What was the nature of those ecstatic journeys?” and it is difficult to explain; but we may conclude from certain other circumstances that there was more reality in them than we might be led to believe. The holy invalid made similar journeys and pilgrimages upon earth, to the holy places in Palestine, to the churches of Rome, and to monasteries in the vicinity. She had an exact knowledge of the places which she had thus traversed. A Religious of the monastery of St. Elizabeth, conversing one day with her, and speaking of the cells, of the chapter room, of the refectory, etc., of his community, she gave him as exact and detailed a description of his house as though she had passed her life there. The Religious having expressed his surprise, “Know, Father,” said she, “that I have been through your monastery; I have visited the cells, I have seen the angel guardians of all those who occupy them.” One of the journeys which our saint made to Purgatory occurred as follows:

An unfortunate sinner, entangled in the corruptions of the world, was finally converted.

Thanks to the prayers and urgent exhortations of Lidwina, he made a sincere Confession of all his sins and received absolution, but had little time to practice penance, for shortly after he died of the plague.

The saint offered up many prayers and sufferings for his soul; and some

time afterwards, having been taken by her angel guardian into Purgatory, she desired to know if he was still there, and in what condition. "He is there," said her angel, "and he suffers much. Would you be willing to endure some pain in order to diminish his?" "Certainly," she replied, "I am ready to suffer anything to assist him." Instantly her angel conducted her into a place of frightful torture. "Is this, then, Hell, my brother?" asked the holy maiden, seized with horror. "No, sister," answered the angel, "but this part of Purgatory is bordering upon Hell." Looking around on all sides, she saw what resembled an immense prison, surrounded with walls of a prodigious height, the blackness of which, together with the monstrous stones, inspired her with horror. Approaching this dismal enclosure, she heard a confused noise of lamenting voices, cries of fury, chains, instruments of torture, violent blows which the executioners discharged upon their victims. This noise was such that all the tumult of the world, in tempest or battle, could bear no comparison to it. "What, then, is that horrible place?" asked St. Lidwina of her good angel. "Do you wish me to show it to you?" "No, I beseech you," said she, recoiling with terror; "the noise which I hear is so frightful that I can no longer bear it; how, then, could I endure the sight of those horrors?"

Continuing her mysterious route, she saw an angel seated sadly on the curb of a well. "Who is that angel?" she asked of her guide. "It is," he replied, "the angel guardian of the sinner in whose lot you are interested. His soul is in this well, where it has a special Purgatory." At these words, Lidwina cast an inquiring glance at her angel; she desired to see that soul which was dear to her, and endeavor to release it from that frightful pit. Her angel, who understood her, having taken off the cover of the well, a cloud of flames, together with the most plaintive cries, came forth.

"Do you recognize that voice?" said the angel to her. "Alas! yes," answered the servant of God. "Do you desire to see that soul?" he continued. On her replying in the affirmative, he called him by his name; and immediately our virgin saw appear at the mouth of the pit a spirit all on fire, resembling incandescent metal, which said to her in a voice scarcely audible, "O Lidwina, servant of God, who will give me to contemplate the face of the Most High?"

The sight of this soul, a prey to the most terrible torment of fire, gave our saint such a shock that the cincture which she wore around her body was rent in twain; and, no longer able to endure the sight, she awoke suddenly from

her ecstasy.

The persons present, perceiving her fear, asked her its cause. “Alas!” she replied, “how frightful are the prisons of Purgatory! It was to assist the souls that I consented to descend thither. Without this motive, if the whole world were given to me, I would not undergo the terror which that horrible spectacle inspired.”

Some days later, the same angel whom she had seen so dejected appeared to her with a joyful countenance; he told her that the soul of his protégé had left the pit and passed into the ordinary Purgatory. This partial alleviation did not suffice the charity of Lidwina; she continued to pray for the poor patient, and to apply to him the merits of her sufferings, until she saw the gates of Heaven opened to him.

Chapter 8

Location of Purgatory—St. Gregory the Great—The Deacon Paschasius and the Priest of Centumcellæ—Blessed Stephen, a Franciscan, and the Religious in his Stall—Theophilus Renaud and the Sick Woman of Dôle.

ACCORDING to St. Thomas and other doctors, as we have previously seen, Divine Justice, in particular cases, assigns a special place upon earth for certain souls. This opinion we find confirmed by several facts, among which we quote the two mentioned by St. Gregory the Great in his *Dialogues*. (*Dialog.*, 4, 40). “Whilst I was young and still a layman, I heard told to the seniors, who were well-informed men, how the Deacon Paschasius appeared to Germain, Bishop of Capua. Paschasius, Deacon of the Apostolic See, whose books on the Holy Ghost are still extant, was a man of eminent sanctity, devoted to works of charity, zealous for the relief of the poor, and most forgetful of self. A dispute having arisen concerning a pontifical election, Paschasius separated himself from the Bishops, and joined the party disapproved by the Episcopacy. Soon after this he died, with a reputation for sanctity which God confirmed by a miracle: an instantaneous cure was effected on the day of the funeral by the simple touch of his dalmatic. Long after this, Germain, Bishop of Capua, was sent by the physicians to the baths of St. Angelo. What was his astonishment to find the same Deacon Paschasius employed in the most menial offices at the baths! “I here expiate,” said the apparition, “the wrong I did by adhering to the wrong party. I beseech of you, pray to the Lord for me: you will know that you have been heard when you shall no longer see me in these places.”

Germain began to pray for the deceased, and after a few days, returning to the baths, sought in vain for Paschasius, who had disappeared. “He had but to undergo a temporary punishment,” says St. Gregory, “because he had sinned through ignorance, and not through malice.”

The same Pope speaks of a priest of Centumcellæ, now Civita Vecchia, who also went to the warm baths. A man presented himself to serve him in the most menial offices, and for several days waited upon him with the most

extreme kindness, and even eagerness. The good priest, thinking that he ought to reward so much attention, came the next day with two loaves of blessed bread, and, after having received the usual assistance of his kind servant, offered him the loaves. The servant, with a sad countenance, replied, "Why, Father, do you offer me this bread? I cannot eat it. I, whom you see, was formerly the master of this place, and, after my death, I was sent back to the condition in which you see me for the expiation of my faults. If you wish to do me good, ah! offer up for me the Bread of the Eucharist."

At these words he suddenly disappeared, and he, whom the priest had thought to be a man, showed by vanishing that he was but a spirit.

For a whole week the good priest devoted himself to works of penance, and each day offered up the Sacred Host in favor of the departed one; then, having returned to the same baths, he no longer found his faithful servant, and concluded that he had been delivered.

It seems that Divine Justice sometimes condemns souls to undergo their punishment in the same place where they have committed their sins. We read in the chronicles of the Friars Minors that Blessed Stephen, Religious of that Order, had a singular devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, so that he passed a part of the night in adoration before it. On one occasion, being alone in the chapel, the darkness broken only by the faint glimmer of the little lamp, he suddenly perceived a Religious in one of the stalls. Stephen approached him, and asked if he had permission to leave his cell at such an hour. "I am a deceased Religious," he replied. "Here, by a decree of God's Justice, must I undergo my Purgatory, because here I sinned by tepidity and negligence at the Divine Office. The Lord permits me to make known my state to you, that you may assist me by your prayers." (Book 4, chap. 30; cf. Rossignoli, *Merveilles du Purgatoire*).

Touched with these words, Bl. Stephen immediately knelt down to recite the *De Profundis* and other prayers; and he noticed that whilst he prayed, the features of the deceased bore an expression of joy. Several times, during the following nights, he saw the apparition in the same manner, but more happy each time as it approached the term of its deliverance. Finally, after the last prayer of Bl. Stephen, it arose all radiant from the stall, expressed its gratitude to its liberator, and disappeared in the brightness of glory. The following incident is so marvellous, that we should hesitate to reproduce it, says Canon Postel, had it not been narrated by Father Theophilus Renaud, theologian and controversialist, who relates it as an event which happened in

his time, and almost under his very eyes.

The Abbé Louvet adds that the Vicar General of the Archbishop of Besançon, after having examined all the details, recognized its truth. In the year 1629, at Dôle, in Franche-Compte, Hugette Roy, a woman of the middle station in life, was confined to bed by inflammation of the lungs, which endangered her life. The physician considering it necessary to bleed her, in his awkwardness cut an artery in the left arm, which speedily reduced her to the last extremity. The following day, at dawn, she saw enter into her chamber a young girl clad in white, of most modest deportment, who asked her if she was willing to accept her services and to be nursed by her. The sick person, delighted with the offer, answered that nothing could give her greater pleasure; and instantly the stranger lighted the fire, approached Hugette, and placed her gently on the bed, and then continued to watch by her and serve her like the most devoted infirmarian. But, oh wonder! contact with the hands of the unknown one was so beneficial that the dying person found herself greatly relieved, and soon felt entirely cured. Then she would absolutely know who the amiable stranger was, and called her that she might question her; but she with drew, saying that she would return in the evening. In the meantime astonishment and curiosity were extreme when the tidings of this sudden cure spread abroad, and nothing was spoken of in Dôle but this mysterious event.

When the unknown visitor returned in the evening, she said to Hugette, without trying to disguise herself, "Know, my dear niece, that I am your aunt, Leonarde Collin, who died seventeen years ago, leaving you an inheritance from her little property. Thanks to the Divine bounty, I am saved, and it was the Blessed Virgin, to whom I had great devotion, who obtained for me this happiness. Without her I was lost. When death suddenly struck me, I was in the state of mortal sin, but the merciful Virgin Mary obtained for me perfect contrition, and thus saved me from eternal damnation. Since that time I am in Purgatory, and our Lord permits me to finish my expiation by serving you during fourteen days. At the end of that time I shall be delivered from my pains if, on your part, you have the charity to make three pilgrimages for me to three holy sanctuaries of the Blessed Virgin."

Hugette, astonished, knew not what to think of this language. Not being able to believe the reality of the apparition, and fearing some snare of the evil spirit, she consulted her confessor, Father Antony Roland, a Jesuit, who advised her to threaten the unknown person with the exorcisms of the

Church. This menace did not disturb her; she replied tranquilly, that she feared not the prayers of the Church, "They have no power," she added, "but against the demons and the damned; none whatever against predestined souls, who are in the grace of God as I am." Hugette was not yet convinced. "How," said she to the young girl, "can you be my Aunt Leonarde? She was old and worn, disagreeable and whimsical, whilst you are young, gentle, and obliging?" "Ah, my dear niece," replied the apparition, "my real body is in the tomb, where it will remain until the resurrection; this one which you see is one miraculously formed from the air to allow me to speak to you, to serve you, and obtain your suffrages. As regards my irritable disposition, seventeen years of terrible suffering have taught me patience and meekness. Know, also, that in Purgatory we are confirmed in grace, marked with the seal of the elect, and therefore exempt from all vice."

After such explanation, incredulity was impossible. Hugette, at once astounded and grateful, received with joy the services rendered during the fourteen days designated. She alone could see and hear the deceased, who came at certain hours and then disappeared. As soon as her strength permitted, she devoutly made the pilgrimages which were asked of her.

At the end of fourteen days the apparition ceased. Leonarde appeared for the last time to announce her deliverance; she was then in a state of incomparable glory, brilliant as a star, and her countenance bore an expression of the most perfect beatitude. In her turn, she testified her gratitude to her niece, promised to pray for her and her whole family, and advised her ever to remember, amid the sufferings of this life, the end of our existence, which is the salvation of our soul.

Chapter 9

The Pains of Purgatory, their Nature, their Rigor—Doctrine of Theologians—Bellarmine—St. Francis of Sales—Fear and Confidence.

THERE is in Purgatory, as in Hell, a double pain—the pain of loss and the pain of sense.

The pain of loss consists in being deprived for a time of the sight of God, who is the Supreme Good, the beatific end for which our souls are made, as our eyes are for the light. It is a moral thirst which torments the soul. The pain of sense, or sensible suffering, is the same as that which we experience in our flesh. Its nature is not defined by faith, but it is the common opinion of the Doctors that it consists in fire and other species of suffering. The fire of Purgatory, say the Fathers, is that of Hell, of which the rich glutton speaks, *Quia crucior in hac flamma*, “I suffer,” he says, “cruelly in these flames.”

As regards the severity of these pains, since they are inflicted by Infinite Justice, they are proportioned to the nature, gravity, and number of sins committed. Each one receives according to his works, each one must acquit himself of the debts with which he sees himself charged before God. Now these debts differ greatly in quality. Some, which have accumulated during a long life, have reached the ten thousand talents of the Gospel, that is to say, millions and ten of millions; whilst others are reduced to a few farthings, the trifling remainder of that which has not been expiated on earth. It follows from this that the souls undergo various kinds of sufferings, that there are innumerable degrees of expiation in Purgatory, and that some are incomparably more severe than others. However, speaking in general, the Doctors agree in saying that the pains are most excruciating. The same fire, says St. Gregory, torments the damned and purifies the elect. (*In Ps. 37*). “Almost all theologians,” says Bellarmine, “teach that the reprobate and the souls in Purgatory suffer the action of the same fire.” (*De Purgat.*, i. 2, cap. 6).

It must be held as certain, writes the same Bellarmine, that there is no

proportion between the sufferings of this life and those of Purgatory. (*De Gemitu Columbae*, lib. 2, cap. 9). St. Augustine declares precisely the same in his commentary on Psalm 31: *Lord*, he says, *chastise me not in Thy wrath*, and reject me not with those to whom Thou hast said, *Go into eternal fire*; but chastise me not in Thine anger: purify me rather in such manner in this life that I need not to be purified by fire in the next. Yes, I fear that fire which has been enkindled for those *who will be saved*, it is true, but *yet so as by fire*. (1 Cor. 3:15). They will be saved, no doubt, after the trial of fire, but that trial will be terrible, that torment will be more intolerable than all the most excruciating sufferings in this world. Behold what St. Augustine says, and what St. Gregory, Venerable Bede, St. Anselm, and St. Bernard have said after him. St. Thomas goes even further; he maintains that the least pain of Purgatory surpasses all the sufferings of this life, whatsoever they may be. Pain, says Bl. Peter Lefèvre, is deeper and more acute when it directly attacks the soul and the mind than when it reaches them only through the medium of the body. The mortal body, and the senses themselves, absorb and intercept a part of the physical, and even of moral pain. (*Sentim. du B. Lefèvre sur la Purg.*, Mess. du S. Cœur, Nov. 1873).

The author of the *Imitation* explains this doctrine by a practical and striking sentence. Speaking in general of the sufferings of the other life: *There*, he says, *one hour of torment will be more terrible than a hundred years of rigorous penance done here*. (lib. 1, chap. 24).

To prove this doctrine, it is affirmed that all the souls in Purgatory suffer the pain of loss. Now this pain surpasses the keenest suffering. But to speak of the pain of sense alone, we know what a terrible thing fire is, how feeble soever the flame which we enkindle in our houses, and what pain is caused by the slightest burn; how much more terrible must be that fire which is fed neither with wood nor oil, and which can never be extinguished! Enkindled by the breath of God to be the instrument of His Justice, it seizes upon souls and torments them with incomparable activity. That which we have already said, and what we have still to say, is well qualified to inspire us with that salutary fear recommended to us by Jesus Christ. But, lest certain readers, forgetful of the Christian confidence which must temper our fears, should give themselves up to excessive fear, let us modify the preceding doctrine by that of another Doctor of the Church, St. Francis of Sales, who presents the sufferings of Purgatory soothed by the consolations which accompany them.

We may, says this holy and amiable director of souls, draw from the

thought of Purgatory more consolation than apprehension. The greater part of those who dread Purgatory so much think more of their own interests than of the interests of God's glory; this proceeds from the fact that they think only of the sufferings without considering the peace and happiness which are there enjoyed by the holy souls. It is true that the torments are so great that the most acute sufferings of this life bear no comparison to them; but the interior satisfaction which is there enjoyed is such that no prosperity nor contentment upon earth can equal it.

The souls are in a continual union with God, They are perfectly resigned to His Will, or rather their will is so transformed into that of God that they cannot will but what God wills; so that if Paradise were to be opened to them, they would precipitate themselves into Hell rather than appear before God with the stains with which they see themselves disfigured. They purify them selves willingly and lovingly, because such is the Divine good pleasure.

They wish to be there in the state wherein God pleases, and as long as it shall please Him. They cannot sin, nor can they experience the least movement of impatience, nor commit the slightest imperfection. They love God more than they love themselves, and more than all things else; they love Him with a perfect, pure, and disinterested love. They are consoled by angels. They are assured of their eternal salvation, and filled with a hope that can never be disappointed in its expectations. Their bitterest anguish is soothed by a certain profound peace. It is a species of Hell as regards the suffering; it is a Paradise as regards the delight infused into their hearts by charity—Charity, stronger than death and more powerful than Hell; Charity, whose lamps are all fire and flame. (*Cant.* 8). "Happy state!" continues the holy Bishop, "more desirable than appalling, since its flames are flames of love and charity." (*Esprit de St. François de Sales*, chap. 9, p. 16).

Such are the teachings of the doctors, from which it follows that if the pains of Purgatory are rigorous, they are not without consolation. When imposing His cross upon us in this life, God pours upon it the unction of His grace, and in purifying the souls in Purgatory like gold in the crucible, He tempers their flames by ineffable consolations. We must not lose sight of this consoling element, this bright side of the often gloomy picture which we are going to examine.

Chapter 10

Pains of Purgatory—The Pain of Loss—St. Catherine of Genoa —St. Teresa—Father Nieremberg.

AFTER having heard the theologians and doctors of the Church, let us listen to doctors of another kind; they are saints who speak of the sufferings of the other life, and who relate what God has made known to them by supernatural communication. St. Catherine of Genoa in her treatise on Purgatory says, “The souls endure a torment so extreme that no tongue can describe it, nor could the understanding conceive the least notion of it, if God did not make it known by a particular grace.” (*Chap. 2, 8*). “No tongue,” she adds, “can express, no mind form any idea of what Purgatory is. As to the suffering, it is equal to that of Hell.”

St. Teresa, in the *Castle of the Soul*, speaking of the pain of loss, expresses herself thus: “The pain of loss, or the privation of the sight of God, exceeds all the most excruciating sufferings we can imagine, because the souls urged on towards God as to the center of their aspiration, are continually repulsed by His Justice. Picture to yourself a shipwrecked mariner who, after having long battled with the waves, comes at last within reach of the shore, only to find himself constantly thrust back by an invisible hand. What torturing agonies! Yet those of the souls in Purgatory are a thousand times greater.” (Part 6, chap. 11).

Father Nieremberg, of the Company of Jesus, who died in the odor of sanctity at Madrid in 1658, relates a fact that occurred at Treves, and which was recognized, says Father Rossignoli (*Merveilles*, 69), by the Vicar General of the diocese as possessing all the characteristics of truth.

On the Feast of All Saints, a young girl of rare piety saw appear before her a lady of her acquaintance who had died some time previous. The apparition was clad in white, with a veil of the same color on her head, and holding in her hand a long rosary, a token of the tender devotion she had always professed towards the Queen of Heaven. She implored the charity of her pious friend, saying that she had made a vow to have three Masses celebrated at the altar of the Blessed Virgin, and that, not having been able to

accomplish her vow, this debt added to her sufferings. She then begged her to pay it in her place. The young person willingly granted the alms asked of her, and when the three Masses had been celebrated, the deceased again appeared, expressing her joy and gratitude. She ever continued to appear each month of November, and almost always in the church. Her friend saw her there in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, overwhelmed with an awe of which nothing can give an idea; not yet being able to see God face to face, she seemed to wish to indemnify herself by contemplating Him at least under the Eucharistic species. During the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, at the moment of the elevation, her face became so radiant that she might have been taken for a seraph descended from Heaven. The young girl, filled with admiration, declared that she had never seen anything so beautiful.

Meanwhile time passed, and, notwithstanding the Masses and prayers offered for her, that holy soul remained in her exile, far from the Eternal Tabernacles. On December 3, Feast of St. Francis Xavier, her protectress going to receive Communion at the Church of the Jesuits, the apparition accompanied her to the Holy Table, and then remained at her side during the whole time of thanksgiving, as though to participate in the happiness of Holy Communion and enjoy the presence of Jesus Christ.

On December 8, Feast of the Immaculate Conception, she again returned, but so brilliant that her friend could not look at her. She visibly approached the term of her expiation. Finally, on December 10, during Holy Mass, she appeared in a still more wonderful state. After making a profound genuflection before the altar, she thanked the pious girl for her prayers, and rose to Heaven in company with her guardian angel.

Some time previous, this holy soul had made known that she suffered nothing more than the pain of loss, or the privation of God; but she added that *that privation caused her intolerable torture*. This revelation justifies the words of St. Chrysostom in his 47th Homily: “*Imagine,*” he says, “*all the torments of the world, you will not find one equal to the privation of the beatific vision of God.*”

In fact, the torture of the pain of loss, of which we now treat, is, according to all the saints and all the doctors, much more acute than the pain of sense. It is true that, in the present life, we cannot understand this, because we have too little knowledge of the Sovereign Good for which we are created; but, in the other life, that ineffable Good seems to souls what bread is to a man famished with hunger, or fresh water to one dying with thirst, like

health to a sick person tortured by long suffering; it excites the most ardent desires, which torment without being able to satisfy them.

Chapter 11

The Pain of Sense—Torment of Fire and Torment of Cold— Venerable Bede and Drithelm.

IF the pain of loss makes but a feeble impression upon us, it is far different with the pain of sense; the torment of fire, the torture of a sharp and intense cold, affrights our sensibility. This is why Divine Mercy, wishing to excite a holy fear in our souls, speaks but little of the pain of loss, but we are continually shown the fire, the cold, and other torments, which constitute the pain of sense. This is what we see in the Gospel, and in particular revelations, by which God is pleased to manifest to His servants from time to time the mysteries of the other life. Let us mention one of these revelations. In the first place, let us see what the pious and learned Cardinal Bellarmine quotes from the Venerable Bede. England has been witness in our own days, writes Bede, to a singular prodigy, which may be compared to the miracles of the first ages of the Church. To excite the living to fear the death of the soul, God permitted that a man, after having slept the sleep of death, should return to life and reveal what he had seen in the other world. The frightful, unheard-of details which he relates, and his life of extraordinary penance, which corresponded with his words, produced a lively impression throughout the country. I will now resume the principal circumstances of this history.

There was in Northumberland a man named Drithelm, who, with his family, led a most Christian life. He fell sick, and his malady increasing day by day, he was soon reduced to extremity, and died, to the great desolation and grief of his wife and children. The latter passed the night in tears by the remains, but the following day, before his interment, they saw him suddenly return to life, arise, and place himself in a sitting posture. At this sight they were seized with such fear that they all took to flight, with the exception of the wife, who, trembling, remained alone with her risen husband. He reassured her immediately: "Fear not," he said; "it is God who restores to me my life; He wishes to show in my person a man raised from the dead. I have yet long to live upon earth, but my new life will be very different from the one I led heretofore." Then he arose full of health, went straight to the chapel

or church of the place, and there remained long in prayer. He returned home only to take leave of those who had been dear to him upon earth, to whom he declared that he would live only to prepare himself for death, and advised them to do likewise. Then, having divided his property into three parts, he gave one to his children, another to his wife, and reserved the third part to give in alms. When he had distributed all to the poor, and had reduced himself to extreme indigence, he went and knocked at the door of a monastery, and begged the Abbot to receive him as a penitent Religious, who would be a servant to all the others.

The Abbot gave him a retired cell, which he occupied for the rest of his life. Three exercises divided his time—prayer, the hardest labor, and extraordinary penances. The most rigorous fasts he accounted as nothing. In winter he was seen to plunge himself into frozen water, and remain there for hours and hours in prayer, whilst he recited the whole Psalter of David.

The mortified life of Drithelm, his downcast eyes, even his features, indicated a soul struck with fear of the judgments of God. He kept a perpetual silence, but on being pressed to relate, for the edification of others, what God had manifested to him after his death, he thus described his vision:

“On leaving my body, I was received by a benevolent person, who took me under his guidance. His face was brilliant, and he appeared surrounded with light. He arrived at a large deep valley of immense extent, all fire on one side, all ice and snow on the other; on the one hand braziers and caldrons of flame, on the other the most intense cold and the blast of a glacial wind.

“This mysterious valley was filled with innumerable souls, which, tossed as by a furious tempest, threw themselves from one side to the other. When they could no longer endure the violence of the fire, they sought relief amidst the ice and snow; but finding only a new torture, they cast themselves again into the midst of the flames.

“I contemplated in a stupor these continual vicissitudes of horrible torments, and as far as my sight could extend, I saw nothing but a multitude of souls which suffered without ever having repose. Their very aspect inspired me with fear. I thought at first that I saw Hell; but my guide, who walked before me, turned to me and said, ‘No; this is not, as you think, the Hell of the reprobate. Do you know,’ he continued, ‘what place this is?’ ‘No,’ I answered. ‘Know,’ he resumed, ‘that this valley, where you see so much fire and so much ice, is the place where the souls of those are punished who, during life, have neglected to confess their sins, and who have deferred

their conversion to the end. Thanks to a special mercy of God, they have had the happiness of sincerely repenting before death, of confessing and detesting their sins. This is why they are not damned, and on the great day of judgment will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Several of them will obtain their deliverance before that time, by the merits of prayers, alms, and fasts, offered in their favor by the living, and especially in virtue of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass offered for their relief.’’

Such was the recital of Drithelm. When asked why he so rudely treated his body, why he plunged himself into frozen water, he replied that he had seen other torments, and cold of another kind.

If his brethren expressed astonishment that he could endure these extraordinary austerities, “I have seen,” said he, “penances still more astonishing.” To the day when it pleased God to call him to Himself, he ceased not to afflict his body, and although broken down with age, he would accept no alleviation.

This event produced a deep sensation in England; a great number of sinners, touched by the words of Drithelm, and struck by the austerity of his life, became sincerely converted.

This fact, adds Bellarmine, appears to me of incontestable truth, since, besides being conformable to the words of Holy Scripture, *Let him pass from the snow waters to excessive heat (Job 29:19)*, Venerable Bede relates it as a recent and well-known event. More than this, it was followed by the conversion of a great number of sinners, the sign of the work of God, who is accustomed to work prodigies in order to produce fruit in souls.

Chapter 12

Pains of Purgatory—Bellarmine and St. Christine the Admirable.

THE learned and pious Cardinal then proceeds to relate the history of St. Christine the Admirable, who lived in Belgium at the close of the twelfth century, and whose body is preserved today in St. Trond, in the church of the Redemptorist Fathers. The Life of this illustrious virgin was, he says, written by Thomas de Cantimpré, a Religious of the Order of St. Dominic, an author worthy of credit and contemporary with the saint. Cardinal James de Vitry, in the preface to the Life of Maria d'Ognies, speaks of a great number of holy women and illustrious virgins; but the one whom he admires above all others is St. Christine, of whom he relates the most wonderful deeds.

This servant of God, having passed the first years of her life in humility and patience, died at the age of thirty-two. When she was about to be buried, and the body was already in the church resting in an open coffin, according to the custom of the time, she arose full of vigor, stupefying with amazement the whole city of St. Trond, which had witnessed this wonder. The astonishment increased when they learned from her own mouth what had happened to her after her death. Let us hear her own account of it.

“As soon,” said she, “as my soul was separated from my body, it was received by angels, who conducted it to a very gloomy place, entirely filled with souls. The torments which they there endured appeared to me so excessive, that it is impossible for me to give any idea of their rigor. I saw among them many of my acquaintances, and, deeply touched by their sad condition, I asked what place it was, for I believed it to be Hell. My guide answered me that it was Purgatory, where sinners were punished who, before death, had repented of their faults, but had not made worthy satisfaction to God. From thence I was conducted into Hell, and there also I recognized among the reprobates some whom I had formerly known.

“The angels then transported me into Heaven, even to the throne of the Divine Majesty. The Lord regarded me with a favorable eye, and I

experienced an extreme joy, because I thought to obtain the grace of dwelling eternally with Him. But my Heavenly Father, seeing what passed in my heart, said to me these words: ‘Assuredly, My dear daughter, you will one day be with Me. Now, however, I allow you to choose, either to remain with Me henceforth from this time, or to return again to earth to accomplish a mission of charity and suffering. In order to deliver from the flames of Purgatory those souls which have inspired you with so much compassion, you shall suffer for them upon earth; you shall endure great torments, without, however, dying from their effects. And not only will you relieve the departed, but the example which you will give to the living, and your life of continual suffering, will lead sinners to be converted and to expiate their crimes. After having ended this new life, you shall return here laden with merits.’

“At these words, seeing the great advantages offered to me for souls, I replied, without hesitation, that I would return to life, and I arose at that same instant. It is for this sole object, the relief of the departed and the conversion of sinners, that I have returned to this world. Therefore be not astonished at the penances that I shall practice, nor at the life that you will see me lead from henceforward. It will be so extraordinary that nothing like to it has ever been seen.”

All this was related by the saint herself; let us now see what the biographer adds in the different chapters of her Life. “Christine immediately commenced the work for which she had been sent by God. Renouncing all the comforts of life, and reduced to extreme destitution, she lived without house or fire, more miserable than the birds of the air, which have a nest to shelter them. Not content with these privations, she eagerly sought all that could cause her suffering. She threw herself into burning furnaces, and there suffering so great torture that she could no longer bear it, she uttered the most frightful cries. She remained for a long time in the fire, and yet, on coming forth, no sign of burning was found upon her body. In winter, when the Meuse was frozen, she plunged herself into it, staying in that cold river not only hours and days, but for entire weeks, all the while praying to God and imploring His mercy. Sometimes, whilst praying in the icy waters, she allowed herself to be carried by the current down to a mill, the wheel of which whirled her round in a manner frightful to behold, yet without breaking or dislocating one of her bones. On other occasions, followed by dogs, which bit and tore her flesh, she ran, enticing them into the thickets

and among the thorns, until she was covered with blood; nevertheless, on her return, no wound or scar was to be seen.”

Such are the works of admirable penance described by the author of the Life of St. Christine. This writer was a Bishop, a suffragan of the Archbishop of Cambray; “and we have,” says Bellarmine, “reason for believing his testimony, since he has for guarantee another grave author, James de Vitry, Bishop and Cardinal, and because he relates what happened in his own time, and even in the province where he lived. Besides, the sufferings of this admirable virgin were not hidden. Everyone could see that she was in the midst of the flames without being consumed, and covered with wounds, every trace of which disappeared a few moments afterwards. But more than this was the marvellous life she led for forty-two years after she was raised from the dead, God clearly showing that the wonders wrought in her were by virtue from on high. The striking conversions which she effected, and the evident miracles which occurred after her death, manifestly proved the finger of God, and the truth of that which, after her resurrection, she had revealed concerning the other life.”

Thus, argues Bellarmine, “God willed to silence those libertines who make open profession of believing in nothing, and who have the audacity to ask in scorn, ‘Who has returned from the other world? Who has ever seen the torments of Hell or Purgatory?’ Behold two witnesses. They assure us that they have seen them, and that they are dreadful. What follows, then, if not that the incredulous are inexcusable, and that those who believe and nevertheless neglect to do penance are still more to be condemned?”

Chapter 13

Pains of Purgatory—Brother Antony Pereyra—The Venerable Angela Tholomei.

TO the two preceding facts we shall add a third, taken from the Annals of the Company of Jesus. We speak of a prodigy which was wrought in the person of Antony Pereyra, Brother Coadjutor of that Company, who died in the odor of sanctity at the College of Evora, in Portugal, August 1, 1645. Forty-six years previous, in 1599, five years after his entrance into the novitiate, this brother was attacked by a mortal malady on the island of St. Michael, one of the Azores. A few moments after he had received the Last Sacraments, in presence of the whole community, who assisted him in his agony, he appeared to breathe forth his soul, and soon became as cold as a corpse. The appearance, though almost imperceptible, of a slight beating of the heart, alone prevented them from interring him immediately. He was therefore left for three entire days upon his bed, and his body already gave evident signs of decomposition, when suddenly, on the fourth day, he opened his eyes, breathed, and spoke.

He was then obliged by obedience to relate to his superior, Father Louis Pinheyro, all that had passed within him since the last terrible moments of his agony. We here give an abridged account of it, as written by his own hand.

“I saw first,” he says, “from my deathbed my Father, St. Ignatius, accompanied by several of our Fathers from Heaven, who came to visit his sick children, seeking those whom he thought worthy to be offered by him and his companions to Our Lord. When he drew near to me I believed for a moment that he would take me, and my heart thrilled with joy; but soon he pointed out to me that of which I must correct myself before obtaining so great a happiness.”

Then, nevertheless, by a mysterious disposition of Divine Providence, the soul of Brother Pereyra separated itself momentarily from his body, and immediately a hideous troupe of demons rushing towards him filled him with terror. At the same moment his guardian angel and St. Antony of Padua, his

countryman and patron, descended from Heaven, put to flight his enemies, and invited him to accompany them to take a glimpse of, and taste for a moment, the joys and sufferings of eternity. “They led me then by turns,” he adds, “towards a place of delights, where they showed me a crown of incomparable glory, but which I had not as yet merited; then to the brink of an abyss, where I saw the reprobate souls fall into the eternal fire, crushed like the grains of wheat cast upon a millstone that turns without intermission. The infernal gulf was like one of those limekilns where, at times, the flames are, as it were, stifled by the mass of materials thrown into them, but which feeds the fire that it may burst forth with more terrible violence.” Led from thence to the tribunal of the Sovereign Judge, Antony Pereyra heard himself condemned to the fire of Purgatory; and nothing, he assures us, can give an idea of what is suffered there, nor of the state of agony to which the souls are reduced by the desire and the delay of the enjoyment of God and of His sacred presence.

When, by the command of God, his soul had been reunited with his body, the renewed tortures of his malady for six entire months, with the additional torture of fire and iron, caused the flesh (already incurably tainted with the corruption of his first death) to fall in pieces; yet not this, nor the frightful penances to which he unceasingly delivered himself, so far as obedience permitted, during the forty-six years of his new life, could appease his thirst for suffering and expiation. “All this,” he said, “is nothing in comparison with what the justice and infinite mercy of God has caused me not only to witness, but also to endure.”

In fine, as an authentic seal upon so many marvels, Brother Pereyra discovered to his superior in detail the secret designs of Providence regarding the future restoration of the kingdom of Portugal, more than half a century before it happened. But we may add without fear that the highest guarantee of all these prodigies was the astonishing degree of sanctity to which Brother Pereyra ceased not to elevate himself from day to day.

Let us relate a similar instance which confirms in every point that which we have just read. We find it in the Life of the venerable servant of God, Angela Tholomei, a Dominican nun. (Cf. Rossignoli, *Merveilles*, 7). She was raised from the dead by her own brother, and gave a testimony of the rigor of God’s judgments exactly conformable to the precedent.

Blessed John Baptist Tholomei (Cf. Marchese, *Sagro Diario Dominicano*, Napoli, 1672, tom. 13, p. 483, et tom. 6, p. 22), whose rare

virtues and the gift of miracles have placed on our altars, had a sister, Angela Tholomei, the heroism of whose virtue has also been recognized by the Church. She fell dangerously sick, and her holy brother by earnest prayer besought her cure. Our Lord replied, as He did formerly to the sister of Lazarus, that He would not cure Angela, but that He would do more; He would raise her from the dead, for the glory of God and the good of souls. She died, recommending herself to the prayers of her holy brother.

Whilst she was being carried to the tomb, Blessed John Baptist, in obedience, no doubt, to an inspiration of the Holy Spirit, approached the coffin, and, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, commanded his sister to come forth. Immediately she awoke as from a profound slumber, and returned to life.

That holy soul seemed struck with terror, and related such things concerning the severity of God's judgments as make us shudder. She commenced, at the same time, to lead a life which proved the truth of her words. Her penance was frightful. Not content with the ordinary practices of the saints, such as fasting, watching, hairshirts, and bloody disciplines, she went so far as to cast herself into flames, and to roll herself therein until her flesh was entirely burnt. Her macerated body became an object of pity and of horror. She was censured and accused of destroying, by her excess, the idea of true Christian penance. She continued, nevertheless, and contented herself with replying, "If you knew the rigors of the judgments of God, you would not speak thus. What are my trifling penances compared with the torments reserved in the other life for those infidelities which we so easily permit ourselves in this world? What are they? What are they? Would that I could do a hundred times more!"

There is no question here, as we see, of the tortures to which great sinners converted before death are subjected, but of the chastisements which God inflicts upon a fervent Religious for the slightest faults.

Chapter 14

Pains of Purgatory—Apparition of Foligno—The Dominican Religious of Zamora.

THE same rigor reveals itself in a more recent apparition, where a Religious who died after an exemplary life makes known her sufferings in a manner calculated to inspire all souls with terror. The event took place on November 16, 1859, at Foligno, near Assisi, in Italy. It made a great noise in the country, and besides the visible mark which was seen, an inquiry made in due form by competent authority establishes it as an incontestable fact.

There was at the convent of Franciscan Tertiaries in Foligno, a sister named Teresa Gesta, who had been for many years mistress of novices, and who at the same time had charge of the sacristy of the community. She was born at Bastia, in Corsica, in 1797, and entered the monastery in the year 1826.

Sister Teresa was a model of fervor and charity. We need not be astonished, said her director, if God glorifies her by some prodigy after her death.

She died suddenly, November 4, 1859, of a stroke of apoplexy.

Twelve days later, on November 16, a sister named Anna Félicia, who succeeded her in office, went to the sacristy and was about to enter, when she heard moans which appeared to come from the interior of the room. Somewhat afraid, she hastened to open the door; there was no one. Again she heard moans, and so distinctly that, notwithstanding her ordinary courage, she felt herself overpowered by fear. “Jesus! Mary!” she cried, “what can that be?” She had not finished speaking when she heard a plaintive voice, accompanied with a painful sigh, “Oh! my God, how I suffer! *Oh! Dio, che peno tanto!*” The sister, stupefied, immediately recognized the voice of poor Sister Teresa. Then the room was filled with a thick smoke, and the spirit of Sister Teresa appeared, moving towards the door, and gliding along by the wall. Having reached the door, she cried aloud, “*Behold a proof of the mercy of God.*” Saying these words, she struck the upper panel of the door, and

there left the print of her right hand, burnt in the wood as with a red-hot iron. She then disappeared.

Sister Anna Félicia was left half dead with fright. She burst forth into loud cries for help. One of her companions ran, then a second, and finally the whole community. They pressed around her, astonished to find a strong odor of burnt wood. Sister Anna Félicia told what had occurred, and showed them the terrible impression on the door. They instantly recognized the hand of Sister Teresa, which had been remarkably small. Terrified, they took to flight and ran to the choir, where they passed the night in prayer and penance for the departed, and the following morning all received Holy Communion for the repose of her soul. The news spread outside the convent walls, and many communities in the city united their prayers with those of the Franciscans. On the third day, November 18, Sister Anna Félicia, on going in the evening to her cell, heard herself called by her name, and recognized perfectly the voice of Sister Teresa. At the same instant a globe or brilliant light appeared before her, illuminating her cell with the brightness of daylight. She then heard Sister Teresa pronounce these words in a joyful and triumphant voice: *“I died on a Friday, the day of the Passion, and behold, on a Friday, I enter into eternal glory!* Be strong to bear the cross, be courageous to suffer, love poverty.” Then adding, affectionately, “Adieu, adieu, adieu!” she became transfigured, and like a light, white, and dazzling cloud, rose towards Heaven and disappeared.

During the investigation which was held immediately, November 23, in the presence of a large number of witnesses, the tomb of Sister Teresa was opened, and the impression upon the door was found to correspond exactly with the hand of the deceased. “The door, with the burnt print of the hand,” adds Mgr. Ségur, “is preserved with great veneration in the convent. The Mother Abbess, witness of the fact, was pleased to show it to me herself.”

Wishing to assure myself of the perfect exactitude of these details related by Mgr. Ségur, I wrote to the Bishop of Foligno. He replied by giving me a circumstantial account, perfectly according with the above, and accompanied by a facsimile of the miraculous mark. This narrative explains the cause of the terrible expiation to which Sister Teresa was subjected. After saying, “Ah! how much I suffer! *Oh! Dio, che peno tanto!*” she added that it was for having, in the exercise of her office of Sacristan, transgressed in some points the strict poverty prescribed by the Rule.

Thus we see Divine Justice punishes most severely the slightest faults. It

may here be asked why the apparition, when making the mysterious mark on the door, called it a proof of the mercy of God. It is because, in giving us a warning of this kind, God shows us a great mercy. He urges us, in the most efficacious manner, to assist the poor suffering souls, and to be vigilant in our own regard.

Whilst speaking of this subject, we may relate a similar instance which happened in Spain, and which caused great rumors in that country. Ferdinand of Castile thus relates it in his *History of Saint Dominic*. (Malvenda, *Annal. Ord. Praedic.*). A Dominican Religious led a holy life in his convent at Zamora, a city of the kingdom of Léon. He was united in the bonds of a pious friendship with a Franciscan brother like himself, a man of great virtue. One day, when conversing together on the subject of eternity, they mutually promised that, if it pleased God, the first who died should appear to the other to give him some salutary advice. The Friar Minor died first; and one day, whilst his friend, the son of St. Dominic, was preparing the refectory, he appeared to him. After saluting him with respect and affection, he told him that he was among the elect, but that before he could be admitted to the enjoyment of eternal happiness, there remained much to be suffered for an infinity of small faults of which he had not sufficiently repented during his life. “Nothing on earth,” he added, “can give an idea of the torments which I endure, and of which God permits me to give you a visible proof.” Saying these words, he placed his right hand upon the table of the refectory, and the mark remained impressed upon the charred wood as though it had been applied with a red-hot iron.

Such was the lesson which the fervent deceased Franciscan gave to his living friend. It was of profit not only to him, but to all those who came to see the burnt mark, so profoundly significant; for this table became an object of piety which people came from all parts to look upon. “*It is still to be seen at Zamora,*” says Father Rossignoli (*Merveilles*, 28), “*at the time at which I write [towards the middle of the last century]; to protect it the spot has been covered with a sheet of copper.*” It was preserved until the end of the last century. Since then it has been destroyed, during the revolutions, like so many other religious memorials.

Chapter 15

Pains of Purgatory—The Brother of St. Magdalen de Pazzi— Stanislaus Chocosca—Blessed Catherine de Racconigi.

ST. Magdalen de Pazzi, in her celebrated vision where the different prisons of Purgatory were shown to her, saw the soul of her brother, who had died after having led a most fervent Christian life. Nevertheless, this soul was detained in suffering for certain faults, which it had not sufficiently expiated upon earth. These, says the saint, are the most intolerable sufferings, and yet they are endured with joy. Ah! why are they not understood by those who lack the courage to bear their cross here below? Struck with this frightful spectacle which she had just contemplated, she ran to her Prioress, and casting herself upon her knees, she cried out, “O my dear Mother, how terrible are the pangs of Purgatory! Never could I have believed it, had not God manifested it to me.... And, nevertheless, I cannot call them cruel; rather are they advantageous, since they lead to the ineffable bliss of Paradise.” To impress this more and more upon our minds, it has pleased God to give certain holy persons a small share in the pains of expiation, like a drop of the bitter cup which the poor souls have to drink, a spark of the fire which consumes them.

The historian Bzovius, in his History of Poland, under the date 1598, relates a miraculous event which happened to the Venerable Stanislaus Chocosca, one of the luminaries of the Order of St. Dominic in Poland. (Cf. Rossign., *Merv.*, 67). One day, whilst this Religious, full of charity for the departed, recited the Rosary, he saw appear near him a soul all enveloped in flames. As she besought him to have pity on her, and to alleviate the intolerable sufferings which the fire of Divine Justice caused her to endure, the holy man asked her if this fire was more painful than that of earth? “Ah!” she cried, “all the fires of earth compared to that of Purgatory are like a refreshing breeze” (*Ignes alii levis auræ locum tenent si cum ardore meo comparentur*). Stanislaus could scarcely believe it. “I wish,” he said, “to have a proof. If God will permit, for your relief, and for the good of my soul, I consent to suffer a part of your pains.” “Alas! you could not do this. Know

that no human being could endure such torment and live. However, God will permit you to feel it in a light degree. Stretch forth your hand.” Chocosca extended his hand, and the departed let fall a drop of sweat, or at least of a liquid which resembled it. At the same instant the Religious uttered a piercing cry and fell fainting to the ground, so frightfully intense was the pain. His brethren ran to the spot and hastened to give him the assistance which his condition required. When restored to consciousness, he related the terrible event which had occurred, and of which they had a visible proof. “Ah! my dear Fathers,” he continued, “if we knew the severity of the Divine chastisements, we should never commit sin, nor should we cease to do penance in this life, in order to avoid expiation in the next.”

Stanislaus was confined to his bed from that moment, He lived one year longer in the most cruel suffering caused by his terrible wound; then, for the last time, exhorting his brethren to remember the rigors of Divine Justice, he peacefully slept in the Lord. The historian adds that this example reanimated fervor in all the monasteries of that province.

We read of a similar fact in the Life of Bl. Catherine de Racconigi. (*Diario Dominicano*, Sept. 4; cf. Rossig., *Merv.*, 63). One day, when suffering so intensely as to need the assistance of her sisters in religion, she thought of the souls in Purgatory, and, to temper the heat of their flames, she offered to God the burning heat of her fever. At that moment, being rapt in ecstasy, she was conducted in spirit into the place of expiation, where she saw the flames and braziers in which the souls are purified in great torture. Whilst contemplating, full of compassion, this piteous spectacle, she heard a voice which said to her, “Catherine, in order that you may procure most efficaciously the deliverance of these souls, you shall participate, in some manner, in their torments.” At that same moment a spark detached itself from the fire and settled upon her left cheek. The sisters present saw the spark distinctly, and saw also with horror that the face of the sick person was frightfully swollen. She lived several days in this state, and, as Bl. Catherine told her sisters, the suffering caused by that simple spark far surpassed all that she had previously endured in the most painful maladies. Until that time Catherine had always devoted herself with charity to the relief of the souls in Purgatory, but from thenceforward she redoubled her fervor and austerities to hasten their deliverance, because she knew by experience the great need in which they stood of her assistance.

Chapter 16

Pains of Purgatory—St. Antoninus and the Sick Religious— Father Rossignoli on a Quarter of an Hour in Purgatory— Brother Angelicus.

THAT which shows still more the rigor of Purgatory is that the shortest period of time there appears to be of very long duration. Everyone knows that days of enjoyment pass quickly and appear short, whilst the time passed in suffering we find very long. Oh, how slowly pass the hours of the night for the poor sick, who spend them in sleeplessness and pain. We may say that the more intense the pain the longer appears the shortest duration of time. This rule furnishes us with a new means of estimating the sufferings of Purgatory.

We find in the Annals of the Friar Minors, under the year 1285, a fact which is also related by St. Antoninus in his *Summa*. (Part 4, § 4). A religious man suffering for a long time from a painful malady, allowed himself to be overcome by discouragement, and entreated God to permit him to die, that he might be released from his pains. He did not think that the prolongation of his sickness was a mercy of God, who wished to spare him more severe suffering. In answer to his prayer, God charged his angel guardian to offer him his choice, either to die immediately and submit to the pains of Purgatory for three days, or to bear his sickness for another year and then go directly to Heaven. The sick man, having to choose between three days in Purgatory and one year of suffering upon earth, did not hesitate, but took the three days in Purgatory. After the lapse of an hour, his angel went to visit him in his sufferings. On seeing him, the poor patient complained that he had been left so long in those torments. “And yet,” he added, “you promised that I should remain here but three days.” “How long,” asked the angel, “do you think you have already suffered?” “At least for several years,” he replied, “and I had to suffer but three days.” “Know,” said the angel, “that you have been here only one hour. The intensity of the pain deceives you as to the time; it makes an instant appear a day, and an hour years.” “Alas! then,” said he with a sigh, “I have been very blind and

inconsiderate in the choice I have made. Pray God, my good angel, to pardon me, and permit me to return to earth. I am ready to submit to the most cruel maladies, not only for two years, but as long as it shall please Him. Rather six years of horrible suffering than one single hour in this abyss of unutterable agonies.”

The following is taken from a pious author quoted by Father Rossignoli. (*Merv.*, 17). Two Religious, of eminent virtue, vied with each other in leading a holy life. One of them fell sick, and learned in a vision that he should soon die, that he should be saved, and that he should remain in Purgatory only until the first Mass should be celebrated for the repose of his soul. Full of joy at these tidings, he hastened to impart them to his friend, and entreated him not to delay the celebration of the Mass which was to open Heaven to him.

He died the following morning, and his holy companion lost no time in celebrating the Holy Sacrifice. After Mass, whilst he was making his thanksgiving, and still continuing to pray for his departed friend, the latter appeared to him radiant with glory, but in a tone sweetly plaintive he asked why that one Mass of which he stood in need had been so long delayed. “My blessed brother,” replied the Religious, “I delayed so long, you say? I do not understand you.” “What! did you not leave me to suffer for more than a year before offering Mass for the repose of my soul?” “Indeed, my dear brother, I commenced Mass immediately after your death; not a quarter of an hour had elapsed.” Then, regarding him with emotion, the blessed soul cried out, “How terrible are those expiatory pains, since they have caused me to mistake minutes for a year. Serve God, my dear brother, with an exact fidelity, in order that you may avoid those chastisements. Farewell! I fly to Heaven, where you will soon join me.”

This severity of Divine Justice in regard to the most fervent souls is explained by the infinite Sanctity of God, who discovers stains in that which appears to us most pure. The Annals of the Order of St. Francis speak of a Religious whose eminent sanctity had caused him to be surnamed Angelicus. (*Chronique des Frères Min.*, p. 2, 1, 4. c. 8; cf. Rossign.). He died in odor of sanctity at the monastery of the Friars Minor in Paris, and one of his brethren in religion, a doctor in theology, persuaded that, after a life so perfect, he had gone directly to Heaven and that he stood in no need of prayers, omitted to celebrate for him the three Masses of obligation which, according to the custom of the Institute, were offered for each departed member.

After a few days, whilst he was walking and meditating in a retired spot, the deceased appeared before him enveloped in flames, and said to him, in a mournful voice, “Dear master, I beg of you have pity upon me!” “What! Brother Angelicus, do you need my assistance?” “I am detained in the fires of Purgatory, awaiting the fruit of the Holy Sacrifice which you should have offered three times for me.” “Beloved brother, I thought you were already in possession of eternal glory. After a life so fervent and exemplary as yours had been, I could not imagine that there remained any pain to be suffered.” “Alas! alas!” replied the departed, “no one can believe with what severity God judges and punishes His creatures. His infinite Sanctity discovers in our best actions defective spots, imperfections which displease Him. He requires us to give an account even to the last farthing. *Usque ad novissimum quadrantem.*”

Chapter 17

Pains of Purgatory—Blessed Quinziani—The Emperor Maurice.

IN the Life of Blessed Stephana Quinziani, a Dominican nun (Auctore Franc. Seghizzo; cf. *Merv.*, 42; Marchese, 2 Jan.), mention is made of a sister named Paula, who died at the convent of Mantua, after a long life of eminent virtue. The body was carried to the church and placed uncovered in the choir among the Religious. During the recitation of the Office, Blessed Quinziani knelt near the bier, recommending to God the deceased Religious, who had been very dear to her. Suddenly the latter let fall the crucifix which had been placed between her hands, extended the left arm, seized the right hand of Blessed Quinziani, and pressed it tightly, as a poor patient in the burning heat of fever would ask the assistance of a friend. She held it for a considerable time, and then, withdrawing her arm, sank back lifeless into the coffin. The Religious, astonished at this prodigy, asked an explanation of the Blessed Sister. She replied that, whilst the deceased pressed her hand, an inarticulate voice had spoken in the depths of her heart, saying, “Help me, dear sister, succor me in the frightful torture which I endure. Oh! if you knew the severity of the Judge who desires all our love, what atonement He demands for the least faults before admitting us to the reward! If you knew how pure we must be to see the face of God! Pray! pray, and do penance for me, who can no longer help myself.”

Blessed Quinziani, touched by the prayer of her friend, imposed upon herself all kinds of penances and good works, until she learned, by a new revelation, that Sister Paula was delivered from her sufferings, and had entered into eternal glory.

The natural conclusion which follows from these terrible manifestations of Divine Justice is that we must hasten to make satisfaction for our sins in this life. Surely a criminal condemned to be burned alive would not refuse a lighter pain, if the choice were left to him. Suppose it should be said to him: You can deliver yourself from that terrible punishment on condition that for three days you fast on bread and water; should he refuse it? He who should

prefer the torture of fire to that of a light penance, would he not be regarded as one who had lost his reason? Now, to prefer the fire of Purgatory to Christian penance is an infinitely greater folly. The Emperor Maurice understood this and acted wisely. History relates that this prince, notwithstanding his good qualities, which had endeared him to St. Gregory the Great, towards the close of his reign committed a grave fault, and atoned for it by an exemplary repentance. (Berault, *Histoire Eccles.*, année 602).

Having lost a battle against the Khan or King of the Avari, he refused to pay the ransom of the prisoners, although he was asked but the sixth part of a gold coin, which is less than a dollar of our money. This mean refusal put the barbarous conqueror into such a violent rage that he ordered the immediate massacre of all the Roman soldiers, to the number of twelve thousand. Then the Emperor acknowledged his fault, and felt it so keenly, that he sent money and candles to the principal churches and monasteries, to beg that God would be pleased to punish him in this life rather than in the next. These prayers were heard. In the year 602, wishing to oblige his troops to pass the winter on the opposite bank of the Danube, a mutiny arose among them; they drove away their general, and proclaimed as Emperor, Phocas, a simple centurion. The imperial city followed the example of the army. Maurice was obliged to fly in the night, after having divested himself of all marks of royalty, which now served but to increase his fears. Nevertheless, he was recognized. He was taken, together with his wife, five of his sons, and three daughters—that is to say, his entire family with the exception of his eldest son, whom he had already caused to be crowned Emperor, and who, thus far, had escaped the tyrant. Maurice and his five sons were unmercifully slaughtered near Chalcedon. The carnage began with the youngest of the princes, who was put to death before the eyes of the unfortunate father, without uttering a word of complaint. Remembering the pains of the other world, he esteemed himself happy to suffer in the present life, and throughout the massacre he spoke no other words than those of the Psalmist, *Thou art just, O Lord, and Thy judgment is right.* (Ps. 118).

Chapter 18

Pains of Purgatory—St. Perpetua—St. Gertrude—St. Catherine of Genoa—Brother John de Via.

AS we have already said, the pain of sense has different degrees of intensity, It is less terrible for those souls that have no grievous sins to atone for, or who, having already completed the most rigorous part of their expiation, approach the moment of their deliverance. Many of those souls suffer then no more than the pain of loss, and even begin to perceive the first rays of heavenly glory, and to have a foretaste of beatitude.

When St. Perpetua (Cf. Mar., ch. 7) saw her young brother Dinocrates in Purgatory, the child did not seem to be subjected to any cruel torture. The illustrious martyr herself writes the account of this vision in her prison at Carthage, where she was confined for the faith of Christ during the persecution under Septimus Severus in the year 205. Purgatory appeared to her under the figure of an arid desert, where she saw her brother Dinocrates, who had died at the age of seven years. The child had an ulcer on his face, and, tormented by thirst, he tried in vain to drink from the waters of a fountain which was before him, but the brim of which was too high for him to reach. The holy martyr understood that her brother was in the place of expiation, and that he besought the assistance of her prayers. She then prayed for him, and three days later, in another vision, she saw the same Dinocrates in the midst of lovely gardens. His face was beautiful, like that of an angel; he was clad in a shining robe; the brink of the fountain was beneath him, and he drank copiously of those refreshing waters from a golden cup. The saint then knew that the soul of her young brother now enjoyed the bliss of Paradise.

We read in the *Revelations of St. Gertrude* that a young Religious of her convent, for whom she had a special love on account of her great virtues, died in the most beautiful sentiments of piety. (*Revelationes Gertrudiana ac Mechtildiana*. Henri Oudin, Poitiers, 1875). Whilst she was fervently recommending this dear soul to God, she was rapt in ecstasy and had a vision. The deceased sister was shown to her standing before the throne of

God, surrounded by a brilliant halo and in rich garments. Nevertheless, she appeared sad and troubled; her eyes were cast down, as though she were ashamed to appear before the face of God; it seemed as though she would hide herself and retire. Gertrude, much surprised, asked of the Divine Spouse of Virgins the cause of this sadness and embarrassment on the part of so holy a soul. "Most sweet Jesus," she cried, "why does not Your infinite goodness invite Your spouse to approach You, and to enter into the joy of her Lord? Why do You leave her aside, sad and timid?" Then Our Lord, with a loving smile, made a sign to that holy soul to draw near; but she, more and more troubled, after some hesitation, all trembling, withdrew.

At this sight the saint addressed herself directly to the soul. "What! my daughter," she said to her, "do you retire when our Lord calls you? You, that have desired Jesus during your whole life, withdraw now that He opens His arms to receive you!" "Ah! my dear Mother," replied the soul, "I am not worthy to appear before the Immaculate Lamb. I have still some stains which I contracted upon earth. To approach the Sun of Justice, one must be as pure as a ray of light. I have not yet that degree of purity which He requires of His saints. Know, that if the door of Heaven were to be opened to me, I should not dare to cross the threshold before being entirely purified from all stain. It seems to me that the choir of virgins who follow the Lamb would repulse me with horror." "And yet," continued the Abbess, "I see you surrounded with light and glory!" "What you see," replied the soul, "is but the border of the garment of glory. To wear this celestial robe we must not retain even the shadow of sin."

This vision shows a soul very near to the glory of Heaven; but her enlightenment concerning the infinite Sanctity of God was of a different order from that which has been given to us. This clear knowledge causes her to seek, as a blessing, the expiation which her condition requires to render her worthy of the vision of the thrice holy God. This is precisely the exact teaching of St. Catherine of Genoa. We know that this saint received particular light from God concerning the state of the souls in Purgatory. She wrote a work entitled *A Treatise on Purgatory*, which has an authority equal to that of St. Teresa. In chapter 8 she thus expresses herself: "The Lord is all-merciful. He stands before us, His arms extended in order to receive us into His glory. But I see also that the Divine Essence is of such purity that the soul, unless she be absolutely immaculate, cannot bear the sight. If she finds in herself the least atom of imperfection, rather than dwell with a stain in the

presence of the Divine Majesty, she would plunge herself into the depths of Hell. Finding in Purgatory a means to blot out her stains, she casts herself into it. She esteems herself happy that, by the effect of a great mercy, a place is given to her where she can free herself from the obstacles to supreme happiness.”

The *History of the Seraphic Order* (Part 4., n. 7; cf. *Merv.*, 83) makes mention of a holy Religious named Brother John de Via, who died piously in a monastery on the Canary Islands. His infirmarian, Brother Ascension, was in his cell praying and recommending to God the soul of the departed, when suddenly he saw before him a Religious of his Order, but who appeared to be transfigured. So radiant was he, that the cell was filled with a beautiful light. The brother, almost beside himself with astonishment, did not recognize him, but ventured to ask who he was and what was the object of his visit. “I am,” answered the apparition, “the spirit of Brother John de Via. I thank you for the prayers which you have poured forth to Heaven in my behalf, and I come to ask of you one more act of charity. Know that, thanks to the Divine mercy, I am in the place of salvation, among those predestined for Heaven—the light which surrounds me is a proof of this. Yet I am not worthy to see the face of God on account of an omission which remains to be expiated. During my mortal life I omitted, through my own fault, and that several times, to recite the Office for the Dead, when it was prescribed by the Rule. I beseech you, my dear brother, for the love you bear Jesus Christ, to say those offices in such a manner that my debt may be paid, and I may go to enjoy the vision of my God.”

Brother Ascension ran to the Father Guardian, related what had happened, and hastened to say the offices required, Then the soul of Blessed Brother John de Via appeared again, but this time more brilliant than before he was in possession of eternal happiness.

Chapter 19

Pains of Purgatory—St. Magdalen de Pazzi and Sister Benedicta—St. Gertrude—Blessed Margaret Mary and Mother de Montoux.

WE read in the Life of St. Magdalen de Pazzi that one of her sisters, named Maria-Benedicta, a Religious of eminent virtue, died in her arms. During her agony she saw a multitude of angels which surrounded her with a joyful air, waiting until she should breathe forth her soul, that they might bear it to the Heavenly Jerusalem; and at the moment she expired, the saint saw them receive the soul under the form of a dove, the head of which was of a golden hue, and disappear with her. Three hours later, watching and praying near the remains, Magdalen knew that the soul of the deceased was neither in Paradise nor Purgatory, but in a particular place where, without suffering any sensible pain, she was deprived of the sight of God.

The following day, whilst Mass was being celebrated for the soul of Maria-Benedicta, at the *Sanctus* Magdalen was again rapt in ecstasy, and God showed her that blessed soul in the glory to which she had just been admitted. Magdalen ventured to ask our Saviour why He had not allowed this dear soul to enter sooner into His holy presence. She received for an answer that in her last sickness Sister Benedicta had shown herself too sensitive to the cares bestowed upon her, which interrupted her habitual union with God and her perfect conformity to His Divine Will.

Let us return to the *Revelations of St. Gertrude*, to which we have just alluded. There we shall find another instance which shows how, for certain souls at least, the sun of glory is preceded by a dawn which breaks by degrees. A Religious died in the flower of her age in the embrace of the Lord. She had been remarkable for her tender devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. After her death St. Gertrude saw her, brilliant with a celestial light, kneeling before the Divine Master, whose glorified wounds appeared like lighted torches, from whence issued five flaming rays that pierced the five senses of the deceased. The countenance of the latter, however, was

clouded by an expression of deep sadness. “Lord Jesus,” cried the saint, “how comes it that whilst You thus illumine Your servant, she does not experience perfect joy?”

“Until now,” replied the good Master, “this sister has been worthy to contemplate My glorified humanity only, and to enjoy the sight of My five wounds, in recompense for her tender devotion to the mystery of the Holy Eucharist; but unless numerous suffrages are offered in her favor, she cannot yet be admitted to the beatific vision, on account of some slight defects in the observation of her holy rules.”

Let us conclude what we have said concerning the nature of these pains by some details which we find in the Life of Blessed Margaret Mary of the Visitation. They are taken in part from the Memoir of Mother Greffier, who, wisely diffident on the subject of the extraordinary graces granted to Blessed Sister Margaret, recognized the truth only after a thousand trials. Mother Philiberte Emmanuel de Montoux, Superior at Annecy, died February 2, 1683, after a life which had edified the whole Order. Mother Greffier recommended her specially to the prayers of Sister Margaret. After some time the latter told her superior that Our Lord had made known to her that this soul was most dear to Him on account of her love and fidelity in His service, and that an ample recompense awaited her in Heaven when she should have accomplished her purification in Purgatory.

The Blessed Sister saw the departed in the place of expiation. Our Lord showed her the sufferings which she endured, and how greatly she was relieved by the suffrages and good works which were daily offered for her throughout the whole Order of the Visitation. During the night from Holy Thursday to Good Friday, whilst Sister Margaret was still praying for her, He showed her the soul of the departed as placed under the chalice which contained the Sacred Host on the altar of repose. There she participated in the merits of His agony in the Garden of Olives. On Easter Sunday, which that year fell on April 18, Sister Margaret saw the soul enjoying the commencement, as it were, of eternal felicity, desiring and hoping soon to be admitted to the vision and possession of God.

Finally, a fortnight after, on May 2, Sunday, Feast of the Good Shepherd, she saw the soul of the departed as rising sweetly into eternal glory, chanting melodiously the canticle of Divine Love.

Let us see how Blessed Margaret herself gives the account of this last apparition in a letter addressed on the same day, May 2, 1623, to Mother de

Saumaise at Dijon: “Jesus forever! My soul is filled with so great a joy that I can scarcely restrain myself. Permit me, dear Mother, to communicate it to your heart, which is one with mine in that of Our Lord. This morning, Sunday of the Good Shepherd, on my awakening, two of my good suffering friends came to bid me adieu. Today the Supreme Pastor receives them into His eternal fold with a million other souls. Both joined this multitude of blessed souls, and departed singing canticles of joy. One is the good Mother Philiberte Emmanuel de Montoux, the other Sister Jeanne Catherine Gâcon. One repeated unceasingly these words: *Love triumphs, love rejoices in God*; the other, *Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, and the Religious who live and die in the exact observance of their rules*. Both desired that I should say to you on their part that death may separate souls, but can never disunite them. If you knew how my soul was transported with joy! For whilst I was speaking to them, I saw them sink by degrees into glory like a person who plunges into the vast ocean. They ask of you in thanksgiving to the Holy Trinity one *Laudate* and three times *Gloria Patri*. As I desired them to remember us, their last words were that *ingratitude is unknown in Heaven*.”

Chapter 20

Diversity of the Pains—King Sancho and Queen Guda—St. Lidwina and the Soul Transpierced—Blessed Margaret Mary and the Bed of Fire.

ACCORDING to the saints, there is great diversity in the corporal pains of Purgatory. Although fire is the principal instrument of torture, there is also the torment of cold, the torture of the members, and the torture applied to the different senses of the human body. This diversity of suffering seems to correspond to the nature of the sins, each one of which demands its own punishment, according to these words: *Quia per quæ peccat quis, per hæc et torquetur*—“By what things a man sinneth, by the same also is he tormented.” (Wis. 11:17). It is just that it should be so with regard to the chastisement, since the same diversity exists in the distribution of the reward. In Heaven each one receives according to his works, and, as Venerable Bede says, each one receives his crown, his robe of glory. For the martyr this robe is of a rich purple color, whilst that of the confessor has the brilliancy of a dazzling whiteness.

The historian John Vasquez, in his chronicle of the year 940, relates how Sancho, King of Leon, appeared to Queen Guda, and by the piety of this princess was delivered from Purgatory. Sancho, who had led a truly Christian life, was poisoned by one of his subjects. After his death, Queen Guda passed her time in praying and causing prayers to be offered for the repose of his soul. Not content with having a great number of Masses offered for his release, in order that she might weep and pray near the dear remains, she took the veil in the convent of Castile, where the body of her husband had been deposited. One Saturday, whilst praying at the feet of the Blessed Virgin, and recommending to her the soul of her departed husband, Sancho appeared to her; but in what condition! Great God! he was clad in garments of mourning and wore a double row of red-hot chains around his waist. Having thanked his pious widow for her suffrages, he conjured her to continue her work of charity. “Ah! if you knew, Guda, what I suffer,” said he to her, “you would do still more. By the bowels of Divine Mercy, I conjure

you, help me, dear Guda; help me, for I am devoured by these flames.”

The Queen redoubled her prayers and good works; she distributed alms among the poor, caused Masses to be celebrated in all parts of the country, and gave to the convent a magnificent ornament for use on the altar.

At the end of forty days the King again appeared. He had been relieved of the burning cincture and of all his other sufferings. In place of his robes of mourning, he wore a mantle of dazzling whiteness, like the sacred ornament which Guda had given to the convent. “Behold me, dear Guda,” said he, “thanks to your prayers, delivered from all my sufferings. May you be forever blessed. Persevere in your holy exercise; often meditate upon the severity of the pains of the other life, and upon the joys of Paradise, whither I go to await you.” With these words he disappeared, leaving the pious Guda overflowing with consolation.

One day a woman, quite disconsolate, went to tell St. Lidwina that she had lost her brother. “My brother has just died,” she said, “and I come to recommend his poor soul to your charity. Offer to God for him some prayers and a part of the sufferings occasioned by your malady.” The holy patient promised her to do so, and some time after, in one of her frequent ecstasies, she was conducted by her angel guardian into the subterranean dungeons, where she saw with extreme compassion the torments of the poor souls plunged in flames. One of them in particular attracted her attention. She saw her transpierced by iron pins. Her angel told her that it was the deceased brother of that woman who had asked her prayers. “If you wish,” he added, “to ask any grace in his favor, it will not be refused to you.” “I ask then,” she replied, “that he may be delivered from those horrible irons that transpierce him.” Immediately she saw them drawn from the poor sufferer, who was then taken from this special prison and placed in the one occupied by those souls that had not incurred any particular torment. The sister of the deceased returning shortly after to St. Lidwina, the latter made known to her the condition of her brother, and advised her to assist him by multiplying her prayers and alms for the repose of his soul. She herself offered to God her supplications and sufferings, until finally he was delivered. (*Vie de Sainte Lidvine*).

We read of the Life of Blessed Margaret Mary that a soul was tortured in a bed of torments on account of her indolence during life; at the same time she was subjected to a particular torture in her heart, on account of certain wicked sentiments, and in her tongue, in punishment of her uncharitable

words. Moreover, she had to endure a frightful pain of an entirely different nature, caused neither by fire nor iron, but by the sight of a condemned soul. Let us see how the Blessed Margaret describes it in her writings.

“I saw in a dream,” she says, “one of our sisters who had died some time previous. She told me that she suffered much in Purgatory, but that God had inflicted upon her a suffering which surpassed all other pains, by showing her one of her near relatives precipitated into Hell.

“At these words I awoke, and felt as though my body was bruised from head to foot, so that it was with difficulty I could move. As we should not believe in dreams, I paid little attention to this one, but the Religious obliged me to do so in spite of myself. From that moment she gave me no rest, and said to me incessantly, ‘Pray to God for me; offer to Him your sufferings united to those of Jesus Christ, to alleviate mine; and give me all you shall do until the first Friday in May, when you will please communicate for me.’ This I did, with permission of my superior.

“Meanwhile the pain which this suffering soul caused me increased to such a degree that I could find neither comfort nor repose. Obedience obliged me to seek a little rest upon my bed; but scarcely had I retired when she seemed to approach me, saying, ‘You recline at your ease upon your bed; look at the one upon which I lie, and where I endure intolerable sufferings.’ I saw that bed, and the very thought of it makes me shudder. The top and bottom was of sharp flaming points which pierced the flesh. She told me then that this was on account of her sloth and negligence in the observance of the rules. ‘My heart is torn,’ she continued, ‘and causes me the most terrible sufferings for my thoughts of disapproval and criticism of my superiors. My tongue is devoured by vermin, and, as it were, torn from my mouth continually, for the words I spoke against charity and my little regard for the rule of silence. Ah! would that all souls consecrated to God could see me in these torments. If I could show them what is prepared for those who live negligently in their vocation, their zeal and fervor would be entirely renewed, and they would avoid those faults which now cause me to suffer so much.’

“At this sight I melted into tears. ‘Alas!’ said she, ‘one day passed by the whole community in exact observance would heal my parched mouth; another passed in the practice of holy charity would cure my tongue; and a third passed without any murmuring or disapproval of superiors would heal my bruised heart; but no one thinks to relieve me.’

“After I had offered the Communion which she had asked of me, she said that her dreadful torments were much diminished, but she had still to remain a long time in Purgatory, condemned to suffer the pains due to those souls that have been tepid in the service of God. As for myself,” adds Blessed Margaret Mary, “I found that I was freed from my sufferings, which I had been told would not diminish until the soul herself should be relieved.” (Languet, *Vie de la B. Marguerite*).

Chapter 21

Diversity of the Pains—Blasio Raised from the Dead by St. Bernardine—Venerable Frances of Pampeluna and the Pen of Fire—St. Corpreus and King Malachy.

THE celebrated Blasio Masseï, who was raised from the dead by St. Bernardine of Siena, saw that there was great diversity in the pains of Purgatory. The account of this miracle is given at length in the *Acta Sanctorum* (Appendix, May 20).

A short time after the canonization of St. Bernardine of Siena, there died at Cascia, in the kingdom of Naples, a child aged eleven years, named Blasio Masseï. His parents had inspired him with the same devotion which they themselves had towards this new saint, and the latter was not slow to recompense it. The day after his death, when the body was being carried to the grave, Blasio awoke as from a profound slumber, and said that St. Bernardine had restored him to life, in order to relate the wonders which the saint had shown him in the other world.

We can easily understand the curiosity which this event produced. For a whole month young Blasio did nothing but talk of what he had seen, and answer the questions put to him by visitors. He spoke with the simplicity of a child, but at the same time with an accuracy of expression and a knowledge of the things of the other life far above his years.

At the moment of his death, he said, St. Bernardine appeared to him, and taking him by the hand, said, “Be not afraid, but pay great attention to what I am going to show you, so that you may remember, and afterwards be able to relate it.”

Now the saint conducted his young protégé successively into the regions of Hell, Purgatory, Limbo, and finally allowed him to see Heaven.

In Hell, Blasio saw indescribable horrors, and the diverse tortures by which the proud, the avaricious, the impure, and other sinners are tormented. Amongst them he recognized several whom he had seen during life, and he even witnessed the arrival of two who had just died, Buccerelli and Frasca. The latter was damned for having kept ill-gotten goods in his possession.

The son of Frasca, struck by this revelation as by a thunderbolt, and knowing well the truth of the statement, hastened to make complete restitution; and not content with this act of justice, that he might not expose himself to share one day the sad lot of his father, he distributed the rest of his fortune to the poor and embraced the monastic life.

From thence conducted into Purgatory, Blasio there saw the most dreadful torments, varied according to the sins of which they were the punishment. He recognized a great number of souls, and several begged him to acquaint their parents and relatives with their suffering condition; they even indicated the suffrages and good works of which they stood in need. When interrogated as to the state of a departed soul, he answered without hesitation, and gave the most precise details. "Your father," said he to one of his visitors, "has been in Purgatory since such a day; he charged you to pay such a sum in alms, and you have neglected to do so." "Your brother," he said to another "asked you to have so many Masses celebrated; you agreed to do so, and you have not fulfilled your engagement; so many Masses remain to be said."

Blasio also spoke of Heaven, the last place into which he had been taken; but he spoke almost like St. Paul, who, having been ravished to the third Heaven, whether with his body or without his body he knew not, there heard mysterious words which no mortal tongue could repeat. What most attracted the attention of the child was the immense multitude of angels that surrounded the throne of God, and the incomparable beauty of the Blessed Virgin Mary, elevated above all the choirs of angels.

The life of Venerable Mother Frances of the Blessed Sacrament, a Religious of Pampeluna (*La Vie par le F. Joachim*; cf. *Merv.*, 26), presents several facts which show that the pains of Purgatory are suited to the faults to be expiated. This venerable servant of God had the most intimate communication with the souls in Purgatory, so that they came in great numbers and filled her cell, humbly awaiting each one in turn to be assisted by her prayers. Frequently, the more easily to excite her compassion, they appeared with the instruments of their sins, now become the instruments of their torture. One day she saw a Religious surrounded by costly pieces of furniture, such as pictures, armchairs, etc., all in flames. She had collected these things in her cell contrary to her vow of religious poverty, and after her death they became her torment.

A notary appeared to her one day with all the insignia of his profession.

Being heaped around him, the flames which issued therefrom caused him the most intense suffering. "I have used this pen, this ink, this paper," said he, "to draw up illegal deeds. I also had a passion for gambling, and these cards which I am forced to hold continually in my hands now constitute my punishment. This flaming purse contains my unlawful gains, and causes me to expiate them."

From all this we should draw great and salutary instruction. Creatures are given to man as a means to serve God; they must be the instruments of virtue and good works. If he abuse them, and make them instruments of sin, it is just they should be turned against him, and become the instruments of his chastisement.

The Life of St. Corpreus, an Irish Bishop, which we find in the *Bollandists* on March 6, furnishes us with another example of the same kind. One day, whilst this holy prelate was in prayer after the Office, he saw appear before him a horrible specter, with livid countenance, a collar of fire about his neck, and upon his shoulders a miserable mantle all in tatters. "Who are you?" asked the saint, not in the least disturbed. "I am a soul from the other life." "What has brought you to the sad condition in which I see you?" "My faults have drawn this chastisement upon me. Notwithstanding the misery to which I now see myself reduced, I am Malachy, formerly King of Ireland. In that high position I could have done much good, and it was my duty to do so. I neglected this, and therefore I am punished." "Did you not do penance for your faults?" "I did not do sufficient penance, and this is due to the culpable weakness of my confessor, whom I bent to my caprices by offering him a gold ring. It is on this account that I now wear a collar of fire about my neck." "I should like to know," continued the Bishop, "why you are covered with these rags?" "It is another chastisement. I did not clothe the naked. I did not assist the poor with the charity, respect, and liberality which became my dignity of king and my title of Christian. This is why you see me clothed like the poor and covered with a garment of confusion." The biography adds that St. Corpreus with his chapter united in prayer, and at the end of six months obtained a mitigation of the suffering, and somewhat later the entire deliverance of King Malachy.

Chapter 22

Duration of Purgatory—Opinions of the Doctors—Bellarmine —Calculations of Father Mumford.

F AITH does not teach us the precise duration of the pains of Purgatory. We know in general that they are measured by Divine Justice, and that for each one they are proportioned to the number and gravity of the faults which he has not yet expiated. God may, however, without prejudice to His Justice, abridge these sufferings by augmenting their intensity; the Church Militant also may obtain their remission by the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and other suffrages offered for the departed.

According to the common opinion of the doctors, the expiatory pains are of long duration. “There is no doubt,” says Bellarmine (*De Gemitu*, lib. 2, c. 9), “that the pains of Purgatory are not limited to ten and twenty years, and that they last in some cases entire centuries. But allowing it to be true that their duration did not exceed ten or twenty years, can we account it as nothing to have to endure for ten or twenty years the most excruciating sufferings without the least alleviation? If a man was assured that he should suffer some violent pain in his feet, or his head, or teeth for the space of twenty years, and that without ever sleeping or taking the least repose, would he not a thousand times rather die than live in such a state? And if the choice were given to him between a life thus miserable and the loss of all his temporal goods, would he hesitate to make the sacrifice of his fortune to be delivered from such a torment? Shall we then find any difficulty in embracing labor and penance to free ourselves from the sufferings of Purgatory? Shall we fear to practice the most painful exercises: vigils, fasts, almsgiving, long prayers, and especially contrition, accompanied with sighs and tears?”

These words comprise the whole doctrine of the saints and theologians.

Father Mumford of the Company of Jesus, in his *Treatise on Charity towards the Departed*, bases the long duration of Purgatory on a calculation of probability, which we shall give in substance. He goes out on the principle that, according to the words of the Holy Ghost, *The just man falls seven*

times a day (Prov. 24:16), that is to say, that even those who apply themselves most perfectly to the service of God, notwithstanding their good will, commit a great number of faults in the infinitely pure eyes of God. We have but to enter into our own conscience, and there analyze before God our thoughts, our words, and works, to be convinced of this sad effect of human misery, Oh! how easy it is to lack respect in prayer, to prefer our ease to the accomplishment of duty, to sin by vanity, by impatience, by sensuality, by uncharitable thoughts and words, by want of conformity to the will of God! The day is long; is it very difficult for even a virtuous person to commit, I do not say seven, but twenty or thirty of this kind of faults and imperfections?

Let us take a moderate estimate, and suppose that you commit about ten faults a day; at the end of 365 days you will have the sum of 3,650 faults. Let us diminish, and, to facilitate the calculation, place it at 3,000 per year. At the end of ten years this will amount to 30,000, and at the end of twenty years to 60,000. Suppose that of these 60,000 faults you have expiated one half by penance and good works, there will still remain 30,000 to be atoned for.

Let us continue our hypothesis: You die after these twenty years of virtuous life, and appear before God with a debt of 30,000 faults, which you must discharge in Purgatory. How much time will you need to accomplish this expiation? Suppose, on an average, each fault requires one hour of Purgatory. This measure is very moderate, if we judge by the revelations of the saints; but at any rate this will give you a Purgatory of 30,000 hours. Now do you know how many years these 30,000 hours represent? Three years, three months, and fifteen days. Thus a good Christian who watches over himself, who applies himself to penance and good works, finds himself liable to three years, three months, and fifteen days of Purgatory.

The preceding calculation is based on an estimate which is lenient in the extreme. Now, if you extend the duration of the pain, and, instead of an hour, you take a day for the expiation of a fault; if, instead of having nothing but venial sins, you bring before God a debt resulting from mortal sins, more or less numerous, which you formerly committed; if you assign, on the average, as St. Frances of Rome says, seven years for the expiation of one mortal sin, remitted as to the guilt, who does not see that we arrive at an appalling duration and that the expiation may easily be prolonged for many years, and even for centuries?

Years and centuries of torments! Oh! if we only thought of it, with what

care should we not avoid the least faults! with what fervor should we not practice penance to make satisfaction in this world!

Chapter 23

Duration of Purgatory—The Cistercian Abbot and Pope Innocent III—John de Lierre.

IN the Life of St. Lutgarda, written by her contemporary, Thomas de Cantimpré, mention is made of a Religious who was otherwise fervent, but who for an excess of zeal was condemned to forty years of Purgatory. This was an Abbot of the Cistercian Order, named Simon, who held St. Lutgarda in great veneration. The saint, on her part, willingly followed his advice, and in consequence a sort of spiritual friendship was formed between them. But the Abbot was not as mild towards his subordinates as he was towards the saint. Severe with himself, he was also severe in his administration, and carried his exactions in matters of discipline even to harshness, forgetting the lesson of the Divine Master, who teaches us to be meek and humble of heart. Having died, and whilst St. Lutgarda was fervently praying and imposing penances upon herself for the repose of his soul, he appeared to her, and declared that he was condemned to forty years of Purgatory. Fortunately he had in Lutgarda a generous and powerful friend. She redoubled her prayers and austerities, and having received from God the assurance that the departed soul should soon be delivered, the charitable saint replied, “I will not cease to weep; *I will not cease to importune Your Mercy until I see him freed from his pains .*”

Since I am mentioning St. Lutgarda, ought I to speak of the celebrated apparition of Pope Innocent III? I acknowledge the perusal of this incident shocked me, and I would fain pass it over in silence. I was reluctant to think that a Pope, and such a Pope, had been condemned to so long and terrible a Purgatory. We know that Innocent III, who presided at the celebrated Council of Lateran in 1215, was one of the greatest Pontiffs who ever filled the chair of St. Peter. His piety and zeal led him to accomplish great things from the Church of God and holy discipline. How, then, admit that such a man was judged with so great severity at the Supreme Tribunal? How reconcile this revelation of St. Lutgarda with Divine Mercy? I wished, therefore, to treat it as an illusion, and sought for reasons in support of this

idea. But I found, on the contrary, that the reality of this apparition is admitted by the gravest authors, and that it is not rejected by any single one. Moreover, the biographer, Thomas de Cantimpré, is very explicit, and at the same time very reserved. “Remark, reader,” he writes at the end of his narrative, “that it was from the mouth of the pious Lutgarda herself that I heard of the faults revealed by the defunct, and which I omit here through respect for so great a Pope.”

Aside from this, considering the event in itself, can we find any good reason for calling it into question? Do we not know that God makes no exception of persons—that the Popes appear before His tribunal like the humblest of the faithful—that all the great and the lowly are equal before Him, and that each one receives according to his works? Do we not know that those who govern others have a great responsibility, and will have to render a severe account? *Judicium durissimum his qui praesunt fiet*—“A most severe judgment shall be for them that bear rule.” (Wis. 6:6). It is the Holy Ghost that declares it. Now, Innocent III reigned for eighteen years, and during most turbulent times; and, add the Bollandists, is it not written that the judgments of God are inscrutable, and often very different from the judgments of men? *Judicia tua abyssus multa.* (Ps. 35:7).

The reality of this apparition cannot, then, be reasonably called in question. I see no reason for omitting it, since God does not reveal mysteries of this nature for any other purpose than that they should be made known for the edification of His Church.

Pope Innocent III died July 16, 1216. The same day he appeared to St. Lutgarda in her monastery at Aywieres, in Brabant. Surprised to see a specter enveloped in flames, she asked who he was and what he wanted. “I am Pope Innocent,” he replied. “Is it possible that you, our common Father, should be in such a state?” “It is but too true. I am expiating three faults which might have caused my eternal perdition. Thanks to the Blessed Virgin Mary, I have obtained pardon for them, but I have to make atonement. Alas! it is terrible; and it will last for centuries if you do not come to my assistance. In the name of Mary, who has obtained for me the favor of appealing to you, help me.” With these words he disappeared. Lutgarda announced the Pope’s death to her sisters, and together they betook themselves to prayer and penitential works in behalf of the august and venerated Pontiff, whose demise was communicated to them some weeks later from another source.

Let us add here a more consoling fact, which we find in the life of the

same saint. A celebrated preacher, named John de Lierre, was a man of great piety and well known to our saint. He had made a contract with her, by which they mutually promised that the one who should die first, with the permission of God, should appear to the other. John was the first to depart this life. Having undertaken a journey to Rome for the arrangement of certain affairs in the interest of the Religious, he met his death among the Alps. Faithful to his promise, he appeared to Lutgarda in the celebrated cloister of Aywieres, On seeing him, the saint had not the slightest idea that he was dead, and invited him, according to the Rule, to enter the parlor that she might converse with him. "I am no more of this world," he replied, "and I come here only in fulfillment of my promise." At these words Lutgarda fell on her knees and remained for some time quite confounded. Then, raising her eyes to her blessed friend, "Why," said she, "are you clothed in such splendor? What does this triple robe signify with which I see you adorned?" "The white garment," he replied, "signifies virginal purity, which I have always preserved; the red tunic implies the labors and sufferings which have prematurely exhausted my strength; and the blue mantle, which covers all, denotes the perfection of the spiritual life." Having said these words, he suddenly left Lutgarda, who remained divided between regret for having lost so good a Father, and the joy she experienced on account of his happiness.

St. Vincent Ferrer, the celebrated wonder worker of the Order of St. Dominic, who preached with so much eloquence the great truth of the Judgment of God, had a sister who remained unmoved either by the words or example of her saintly brother. She was full of the spirit of the world, intoxicated with its pleasures, and walked with rapid strides towards her eternal ruin. Meanwhile, the saint prayed for her conversion, and his prayer was finally answered. The unfortunate sinner fell mortally sick; and, at the moment of death, entering into herself, she made her confession with sincere repentance.

Some days after her death, whilst her brother was celebrating the Holy Sacrifice, she appeared to him in the midst of flames and a prey to the most intolerable torments. "Alas! my dear brother," said she, "I am condemned to undergo these torments until the day of the Last Judgment. Nevertheless, you can assist me. The efficacy of the Holy Sacrifice is so great: offer for me about thirty Masses, and I may hope the happiest result." The saint hastened to accede to her request. He celebrated the thirty Masses, and on the thirtieth day his sister again appeared to him surrounded by angels and soaring to

Heaven. Thanks to the virtue of the Divine Sacrifice, an expiation of several centuries was reduced to thirty days.

This example shows us at once the duration of the pains which a soul may incur, and the powerful effect of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, when God is pleased to apply it to a soul. But this application, like all other suffrages, does not always take place, at least not always in the same plenitude.

Chapter 24

Duration of Purgatory—The Duellist—Father Schoofs and the Apparition at Antwerp.

THE following example shows not only the long duration of the punishment inflicted for certain faults, but also the difficulty to inclining Divine Justice in favor of those who have committed faults of this nature.

The history of the Order of the Visitation mentions, among the first Religious of that Institute, Sister Marie Denise, called in the world Mdlle. Marie Martignat. She was most charitably devoted to the souls in Purgatory, and felt herself particularly drawn to recommend to God in a special manner those who had held high positions in the world, for she knew by experience the dangers to which their positions exposed them. A certain prince, whose name is not given, but who it is believed belonged to the House of France, was killed in a duel, and God permitted him to appear to Sister Denise to ask of her the assistance of which he stood so greatly in need. He told her that he was not damned, although his crime merited damnation. Thanks to an act of perfect contrition which he had made at the moment of death, he had been saved; but, in punishment for his guilty life and death, he was condemned to the most rigorous chastisement in Purgatory until the Day of Judgment.

The charitable sister, deeply touched by the state of this soul, generously offered herself as a victim for him. But it is impossible to say what she had to suffer for many years in consequence of that heroic act. The poor prince left her no repose, and made her partake of his torments. She completed her sacrifice by death; but before expiring she confided to her Superior that, in return for so much expiation, she had obtained for her protégé the remission of but a few hours of pain. When the Superior expressed her astonishment at this result, which seemed to her entirely disproportionate with what the sister had suffered, Sister Denise replied, “Ah! my dear Mother, the hours of Purgatory are not computed like those of earth; years of grief, weariness, poverty, or sickness in this world are nothing compared to one hour of the suffering of Purgatory. It is already much that Divine Mercy permits us to

exercise any influence whatever over His Justice. I am less moved by the lamentable state in which I have seen this soul languish, than by the extraordinary return of grace which has consummated the work of his salvation. The act in which the prince died merited Hell; a million others might have found their eternal perdition in the same act in which he found his salvation. He recovered consciousness but for one instant, just time sufficient to co-operate with that precious movement of grace which disposed him to make an act of perfect contrition. That blessed moment seems to me to be an excess of the goodness, clemency, and infinite love of God."

Thus spoke Sister Denise; she admired at once the severity of God's Justice, and His infinite Mercy. Both one and the other shone forth in this example in the most striking manner.

Continuing the subject of the long duration of Purgatory, we will here relate an instance of more recent occurrence.

Father Philip Schoofs, of the Company of Jesus, who died in Louvain in 1878, related the following fact, which happened in Antwerp during the first years of his ministry in that city. He had just preached a mission, and had returned to the College of Notre Dame, then situated in the Rue l'Empereur, when he was told someone asked for him in the parlor. Descending immediately, he found there two young men in the flower of their age, with a pale and sickly child of about ten years. "Father," said they, "here is a poor child that we have adopted, and who deserves our protection because he is good and pious. We feed and educate him and, for more than a year that he has formed part of our family, he has been happy and enjoyed good health. It is only for the last few weeks that he has commenced to grow thin and pine away, as you now see him." "What is the cause of this change?" asked the Father. "It is fright," they replied; "the child is awakened every night by apparitions. A man, he assures us, presents himself before him, and he sees him as distinctly as he sees us in full daylight. This is the cause of his continual fear and uneasiness. We come, Father, to ask of you some remedy." "My friends," replied Father Schoofs, "with God there is a remedy for all things. Begin, both of you, by making a good Confession and Communion, beg God to deliver you from all evil, and fear nothing. As for you, my child, say your prayers well, then sleep so soundly that no ghost can awake you." He then dismissed them, telling them to return in case anything more should happen. Two weeks passed, and they again returned. "Father,"

said they, “we have followed your orders, and yet the apparitions continue as before, The child always sees the same man appear.” “From this evening,” said Father Schoofs, “watch at the door of the child’s room, provided with paper and ink with which to write the answers. When he warns you of the presence of that man, ask in the name of God who he is, the time of his death, where he lived, and why he returns.”

The following day they returned, carrying the paper on which was written the answers which they had received. “We saw,” they said, “the man that appears to the child.” They described him as an old man, of whom they could but see the bust, and he wore a costume of the olden times. He told them his name, and the house in which he had dwelt in Antwerp. He had died in 1636, had followed the profession of banker in that same house, which in his time comprised the two houses which today may be seen situated to the right and left of it. Let us remark here that certain documents which prove the accuracy of these indications have since been discovered in the archives of the city of Antwerp. He added that he was in Purgatory and that few prayers had been said for him. He then begged the persons of the house to offer Holy Communion for him, and finally asked that a pilgrimage might be made for him to Notre Dame des Fièvres, and another to Notre Dame de la Chapelle in Brussels. “You will do well to comply with all these requests,” said Father Schoofs, “and if the spirit returns, before speaking to him, require him to say the *Pater*, *Ave*, and *Credo*.”

They accomplished the good works indicated with all possible piety, and many conversions were effected. When all was finished, the young men returned. “Father, he prayed,” they said to Father Schoofs, “but in a tone of indescribable faith and piety. We never heard anyone pray thus. What reverence in the Our Father! What love in the Hail Mary! What fervor in the I Believe! Now we know what it is to pray. Then he thanked us for our prayers; he was greatly relieved, and would have been entirely delivered had not an assistant in our shop made a sacrilegious Communion. We have,” they continued, “reported these words to the person. She turned pale, acknowledged her guilt, then running to her confessor, hastened to repair her crime.”

“Since that day,” adds Father Schoofs, “that house has never been troubled. The family that inhabit it have prospered rapidly, and today they are rich. The two brothers continue to conduct themselves in an exemplary manner, and their sister became a Religious in a convent, of which she is at

the present time Superior.”

Everything leads us to believe that the prosperity of that family was the result of the succor given to the departed soul. After two centuries of punishment there remained to the latter but a small part of the expiation, and the performance of some good works which he asked. When these were accomplished, he was delivered, and wished to show his gratitude by obtaining the blessings of God upon his benefactors.

Chapter 25

Duration of Purgatory—The Abbey of Latrobe—A Hundred Years of Suffering for Delay in the Reception of the Last Sacraments.

THE following incident is related with authentic proof by the journal, *The Monde*, in the number of April 1860. It took place in America, in the Abbey of the Benedictines, situated in the village of Latrobe. A series of apparitions occurred during the course of the year 1859. The American press took up the matter, and treated those grave questions with its usual levity. In order to put a stop to scandal, the Abbot Wimmer, superior of the house, addressed the following letter to the newspapers.

“The following is a true statement of the case: In our Abbey of St. Vincent, near Latrobe, on September 10, 1859, a novice saw an apparition of a Benedictine in full choir dress. This apparition was repeated every day from September 18 until November 19, either at eleven o’clock, at noon, or at two o’clock in the morning. It was only on the 19th of November that the novice interrogated the spirit, in presence of another member of the community, and asked the motive of these apparitions. He replied that he had suffered for seventy-seven years for having neglected to celebrate seven Masses of obligation; that he had already appeared at different times to seven other Benedictines, but that he had not been heard, and that he would be obliged to appear again after eleven years if the novice did not come to his assistance. Finally, the spirit asked that these seven Masses might be celebrated for him; moreover, the novice must remain in retreat for seven days, keep strict silence, and during thirty days recite three times a day the psalm *Miserere*, his feet bare, and his arms extended in the form of a cross. All the conditions were fulfilled between November 20 and December 25, and on that day, after the celebration of the last Mass, the apparition disappeared.

“During that period the spirit showed itself several times, exhorting the novice in the most urgent manner to pray for the souls in Purgatory; for, said he, they suffer frightfully, and are extremely grateful to those who co-operate

in their deliverance, He added, sad to relate, that of the five priests who had died in our Abbey, not one had yet entered Heaven, all were suffering in Purgatory. I do not draw any conclusion, but this is correct.”

This account, signed by the hand of the Abbot, is an incontestable historical document.

As regards the conclusion which the venerable prelate leaves us to draw, it is evident.

Seeing that a Religious is condemned to Purgatory for seventy-seven years, let it suffice for us to learn the necessity of reflecting on the duration of future punishment, as well for priests and Religious as for the ordinary faithful living in the midst of the corruption of the world.

A too frequent cause of the long continuance of Purgatory is that many deprive themselves of a great means established by Jesus Christ for shortening it, by delaying, when dangerously sick, to receive the last Sacraments. These Sacraments, destined to prepare souls for their last journey, to purify them from the remains of sin, and to spare them the pains of the other life, require, in order to produce their effects, that the sick person receive them with the requisite dispositions. Now, the longer they are deferred, and the faculties of the sick person allowed to become weak, the more defective do those dispositions become. What do I say? Very often it happens, in consequence of this imprudent delay, that the sick person dies deprived of this absolutely necessary help. The result is, that if the deceased is not damned, he is plunged into the deepest abysses of Purgatory, loaded with all the weight of his debts.

Michael Alix (Hort. Past., Tract. 6.; cf. Rossignoli, *Merveilles*, 86) speaks of an ecclesiastic who, instead of promptly receiving the Extreme Unction, and therein giving a good example to the faithful, was guilty of negligence in this respect, and was punished by a hundred years of Purgatory. Knowing that he was seriously ill and in danger of death, this poor priest should have made known his condition, and immediately had recourse to the succors which the Mother Church reserves for her children in that supreme hour. He omitted to do so; and, whether through an illusion common among sick people, he would not declare the gravity of his situation, or whether he was under the influence of that fatal prejudice which causes weak Christians to defer the reception of the last Sacraments, he neither asked for nor thought of receiving them. But we know how death comes by stealth; the unfortunate man deferred so long that he died without

having had the time to receive either the Viaticum or Extreme Unction. Now, God was pleased to make use of this circumstance to give a great warning to others. The deceased himself came to make known to a brother ecclesiastic that he was condemned to Purgatory for a hundred years. “I am thus punished,” he said, “for delaying to receive the grace of the last purification. Had I received the Sacraments as I ought to have done, I should have escaped death through the virtue of Extreme Unction, and I should have had time to do penance.”

Chapter 26

Duration of Purgatory—Venerable Catherine Paluzzi and Sister Bernardine—Brothers Finetti and Rudolfini—St. Peter Claver and the two Poor Women.

LET us cite some other examples which will serve to convince us still more of the long duration of the sufferings of Purgatory. We shall see therein that Divine Justice is relatively severe towards souls called to perfection, and who have received much grace. Does not Jesus Christ say in the Gospel, *Unto whom much is given, of him much shall be required: and to whom they have committed much, of him they will demand the more?* (Lk. 12:48).

We read in the Life of Venerable Catherine Paluzzi that a holy Religious, who died in her arms, was not admitted to eternal beatitude until after she had passed an entire year in Purgatory. Catherine Paluzzi led a holy life in the diocese of Nepi, in Italy, where she founded a convent of Dominicans. There lived with her a Religious named Bernardine, who was far advanced in the ways of the spiritual life. These two saints emulated each other in fervor, and helped each other to progress more and more in the perfection to which God called them.

The biographer of Venerable Catherine compares them to two live coals that communicate heat to each other; and again, to two harps tuned to harmonize together in one perpetual hymn of love to the greater glory of God.

Bernardine died; a painful malady, which she bore with Christian patience, carried her to her grave. When about to expire, she told Catherine that she would not forget her before God, and, if God so permitted, she would return to converse with her on such spiritual matters as would contribute to her sanctification.

Catherine prayed much for the soul of her friend, and at the same time besought God to allow her to appear to her. An entire year elapsed and the deceased did not return. Finally, on the anniversary of the death of Bernardine, Catherine being in prayer, saw a pit from whence issued

volumes of smoke and flames; then she perceived coming out of the pit a form surrounded by dark clouds, By degrees these vapors were dispersed, and the apparition became radiant with an extraordinary brilliancy. In this glorious personage Catherine recognized Bernardine and ran towards her. "Is it you, my dearest sister?" said she. "But when do you come? What signifies this pit, this fiery smoke? Does your Purgatory end only today?" "You are right," replied the soul; "for a year I have been detained in that place of expiation, and today, for the first time, shall I enter Heaven. As regards yourself, persevere in your holy exercises: continue to be charitable and merciful, and you will obtain mercy." (*Diario Domenicano*. Cf. Rossign., *Merv.*, part 2, 51).

The following incident belongs to the history of the Society of Jesus. Two scholastics or young Religious of that Institute, Brothers Finetti and Rudolfini, pursued their studies at the Roman College towards the end of the sixteenth century. Both were models of piety and regularity, both also received a warning from Heaven, which they disclosed, according to the Rule, to their spiritual director. God made known to them their approaching death and the suffering that awaited them in Purgatory. One was to remain there for two years; the other, four. They died, in fact, one after the other. Their brethren in religion immediately offered the most fervent prayers and all kinds of penances for the repose of their souls. They knew that if the Sanctity of God imposes long expiations upon His elect, they may be abridged and entirely remitted by the suffrages of the living. If God is severe towards those who have received much knowledge and grace, on the other hand He is very indulgent towards the poor and the simple, provided they serve Him with sincerity and patience.

St. Peter Claver, of the Company of Jesus, Apostle of the Negroes of Carthagena, knew of the Purgatory of two souls, who had led poor and humble lives upon earth; their sufferings were reduced to a few hours. We find the following account of it in the Life of this great servant of God. (*Vie de S. Pierre Claver*, par le P. Fleurian). He had persuaded a virtuous negress, named Angela, to take into her house another negress named Ursula, who had lost the use of her limbs and was covered with sores. One day when he went to visit them, as he did from time to time, to hear their Confessions and to carry them some little provisions, the charitable hostess told him with grief that Ursula was at the point of death. *No, no*, replied the Father, consoling her, *she has yet four days to live, and she will not die until*

Saturday. When Saturday came, he said Mass for her intention, and went out to prepare her for death. After spending some time in prayer, he said to the hostess with an air of confidence, *Be consoled, God loves Ursula; she will die today, but she will be only three hours in Purgatory. Let her remember me when she shall be with God, that she may pray for me and for the one who until now had been a mother to her.* She died at noon, and the fulfilment of one part of the prophecy gave great reason for belief in the accomplishment of the other.

Another day, having gone to hear the Confession of a poor sick person whom he was accustomed to visit, he learned that she was dead. The parents were extremely afflicted, and he himself, who had not believed her to be so near her end, was inconsolable at the thought of not having been able to assist her in her last moments. He knelt down to pray by the corpse, then suddenly rising, with a serene countenance he said, *Such a death is more worthy of our envy than of our tears; this soul is condemned to Purgatory, but only for twenty-four hours. Let us endeavor to shorten this time by the fervor of our prayers.*

Enough has been said on the duration of the pains. We see that they may be prolonged to an appalling degree; even the shortest, if we consider their severity, are long. Let us endeavor to shorten them for others and to mitigate them for ourselves, or better still to prevent them altogether.

Now we prevent them by removing the causes. What are the causes? What is the matter of expiation in Purgatory?

Chapter 27

The Cause of Suffering—Matter of the Expiations of Purgatory—Doctrine of Suarez—St. Catherine of Genoa.

WHY must souls thus suffer before being admitted to see the face of God? What is the matter, what is the subject of these expiations? What has the fire of Purgatory to purify, to consume in them? It is, say the doctors, the stains left by their sins.

But what is here understood by *stains*? According to most theologians, it is not the guilt of sin, but the pain or the debt of pain proceeding from sin. To understand this well, we must remember that sin produces a double effect on the soul, which we call the debt (*reatus*) of guilt and the debt of pain; it renders the soul not only guilty, but deserving of pain or chastisement. Now, after the guilt is pardoned, it generally happens that the pain remains to be undergone, either entirely or in part, and this must be endured either in the present life or in the life to come.

The souls in Purgatory retain not the slightest stain of guilt; the venial guilt which they had at the moment of their death has disappeared in the order of pure charity, with which they are inflamed in the other life, but they still bear the debt of suffering which they had not discharged before death.

This debt proceeds from all the faults committed during their life, especially from mortal sins remitted as to the guilt, but which they have neglected to expiate by worthy fruits of exterior penance.

Such is the common teaching of theologians, which Suarez sums up in his *Treatise on the Sacrament of Penance*. (Vol. 19, *De Poenit.*, Disput. 11, sect. 4). “We conclude then,” he says, “that all venial sins with which a just man dies are remitted as to the guilt, at the moment when the soul is separated from the body, by virtue of an act of love of God, and the perfect contrition which it then excites over all its past faults. In fact, the soul at this moment knows its condition perfectly, and the sins of which it has been guilty before God; at the same time, it is mistress of its faculties, to be able to act. On the other hand, on the part of God, the most efficacious helps are given to her, that she may act according to the measure of sanctifying grace

which she possesses. It follows, then, that in this perfect disposition, the soul acts without the least hesitation. It turns directly towards its God, and finds itself freed from all its venial sins by an act of sovereign loathing of sin. This universal and efficacious act suffices for the remission of their guilt.

All stain of guilt has then disappeared; but the pain remains to be endured, in all its rigor and long duration, at least for those souls that are not assisted by the living. They cannot obtain the least relief for themselves, because the time of merit has passed; they can no longer merit, they can but suffer, and in that way pay to the terrible justice of God all that they owe, even to the last farthing. *Usque ad novissimum quadrantem.* (Matt. 5:26).

These debts of pain are *the remains of sin*, and a kind of stain, which intercepts the vision of God, and places an obstacle to the union of the soul with its last end. Since the souls in Purgatory are freed from the guilt of sin, writes St. Catherine of Genoa, there is no other barrier between them and their union with God save the remains of sin, from which they must be purified. (*Traité du Purgatoire*, chap. 3). This hindrance which they feel within them causes them to suffer the torments of the damned, of which I have spoken elsewhere, and retards the moment when the instinct by which they are drawn towards God as to their Sovereign Beatitude will attain its full perfection. They see clearly how serious before God is even the slightest obstacle raised by the remains of sin, and that it is by necessity of justice that He delays the full gratification of their desire of everlasting bliss.

This sight enkindles within them a burning flame, like that of Hell, yet without the guilt of sin.

Chapter 28

Matter of Expiation—The Remains of Mortal Sin—Lord Stourton—Sins of Lust not fully Expiated upon Earth—Saint Lidwina.

WE have said that the total amount of the debt of suffering for Purgatory comes from all the faults not atoned for upon earth, but especially from mortal sins remitted to their guilt. Now men who pass their whole lives in a habitual state of mortal sin, and who delay their conversion until death, supposing that God grants them that rare grace, will have to undergo the most frightful punishment. The example of Lord Stourton gives them good cause for reflection. Lord Stourton, an English nobleman, was at heart a Catholic, although, to retain his position at court, he regularly attended the Protestant service. He kept a Catholic priest concealed in his house, at the risk of great danger, promising himself to make good use of his ministry by being reconciled with God at the hour of his death. But he met with a sudden accident, and, as often happens in such cases, by a just decree of God, he had not the time to realize his desire of tardy conversion. Nevertheless Divine Mercy, taking into consideration what he had done for the persecuted Catholic Church in England, vouchsafed him the grace of perfect contrition, and consequently secured his salvation. But he had to pay dearly for his culpable negligence.

Years passed by. His widow married again and had children. It was one of her daughters, Lady Arundel, who relates this fact as an eyewitness:

“One day my mother asked F. Cornelius, a Jesuit of much merit, and who later died a martyr (he was betrayed by a servant of the Arundel family, and was executed at Dorchester in 1594), to say Mass for the repose of the soul of John, Lord Stourton, her first husband. He promised to do so; and whilst at the altar, between the *Consecration* and the *Memento* for the dead, he paused for a long time as if absorbed in prayer. After Mass, in an exhortation which he addressed to those present, he told them of a vision which he had just had during the Holy Sacrifice. He had seen an immense forest stretched out before him, but entirely on fire, forming one vast cauldron. In the midst

of it was the deceased nobleman, uttering lamentable cries, bewailing the guilty life he led in the world and at court. Having made a full Confession of his faults, the unfortunate man ended with these words, which Holy Scripture places in the mouth of Job: *Have pity on me! Have pity on me, at least you my friends, for the hand of the Lord hath touched me.* He then disappeared.

“Whilst relating this, F. Cornelius shed abundance of tears, and we all, members of the family, to the number of twenty-four persons, wept also. Suddenly, whilst the Father was still speaking, we perceived upon the wall against which the altar stood what seemed to be the reflection of burning coals.”

Such is the recital of Dorothy, Lady Arundel, which may be read in the *History of England*, by Daniel. (Bk. 5.; cf. Rossign., *Merv.*, 715).

St. Lidwina saw in Purgatory a soul that suffered also for mortal sins not sufficiently expiated on earth. The incident is thus related in the Life of the saint. A man who had been for a long time a slave of the demon of impurity, finally had the happiness of being converted. He confessed his sins with great contrition, but, prevented by death, he had not time to atone by just penance for his numerous sins. Lidwina, who knew him well, prayed much for him. Twelve years after his death she still continued to pray, when, in one of her ecstasies, being taken into Purgatory by her angel guardian, she heard a mournful voice issuing from a deep pit. “It is the soul of that man,” said the angel, “for whom you have prayed with so much fervor and constancy.” She was astonished to find him so deep in Purgatory twelve years after his death. The Angel, seeing her so greatly affected, asked if she was willing to suffer something for his deliverance. “With all my heart,” replied the charitable maiden. From that moment she suffered new pains and frightful torments, which appeared to surpass the strength of human endurance. Nevertheless, she bore them with courage, sustained by a charity stronger than death, until it pleased God to send her relief. She then breathed as one restored to a new life, and, at the same time, she saw that soul for which she had suffered so much come forth from the abyss as white as snow and take its flight to Heaven.

Chapter 29

Matter of Expiation—Worldliness—St. Bridget—The Young Person—The Soldier—Blessed Mary Villani and the Worldly Lady.

S OULS that allow themselves to be dazzled by the vanities of the world, even if they have the good fortune to escape damnation, will have to undergo terrible punishment. Let us open the *Revelations of St. Bridget*, which are held in such esteem by the Church. We read there in Book six that the saint saw herself transported in spirit into Purgatory, and that, among others, she saw there a young lady of high birth who had formerly abandoned herself to the luxury and vanities of the world. This unfortunate soul related to her the history of her life, and the sad state in which she then was. “Happily,” said she, “before death I confessed my sins in such dispositions as to escape Hell, but now I suffer here to expiate the worldly life that my mother did not prevent me from leading! Alas!” she added, with a sigh, “this head, which loved to be adorned, and which sought to draw the attention of others, is now devoured with flames within and without, and these flames are so violent that every moment it seems to me that I must die. These shoulders, these arms, which I loved to see admired, are cruelly bound in chains of red-hot iron. These feet, formerly trained for the dance, are now surrounded with vipers that tear them with their fangs and soil them with their filthy slime; all these members which I have adorned with jewels, flowers, and divers other ornaments, are now a prey to the most horrible torture. O mother, mother!” she cried, “how culpable have you been in my regard! It was you who, by a fatal indulgence, encouraged my taste for display and extravagant expense; it was you that took me to theaters, parties, and balls, and to those worldly assemblies which are the ruin of souls.... If I have not incurred eternal damnation, it was because a special grace of God’s mercy touched my heart with sincere repentance. I made a good Confession, and thus I have been delivered from Hell, yet only to see myself precipitated into the most horrible torments of Purgatory.” We have remarked already that what is said of the tortured members must not be taken literally, because

the soul is separated from the body; but God, supplying the want of corporal organs, makes the soul experience such sensations as have just been described. The biographer of the saint tells us that she related this vision to a cousin of the deceased, who was likewise given to the illusions of worldly vanity. The cousin was so struck that she renounced the luxuries and dangerous amusements of the world, and devoted the remainder of her life to penance in an austere religious order.

The same St. Bridget, during another ecstasy, beheld the judgment of a soldier who had just died. He had lived in the vices too common in his profession, and would have been condemned to Hell had not the Blessed Virgin, whom he had always honored, preserved him from that misfortune by obtaining for him the grace of a sincere repentance. The saint saw him appear before the judgment seat of God and condemned to a long Purgatory for the sins of all kinds which he had committed. "The punishment of the eyes," said the Judge, "shall be to contemplate the most frightful objects; that of the tongue, to be pierced with pointed needles and tormented with thirst; that of the touch, to be plunged in an ocean of fire." Then the Holy Virgin interceded, and obtained some mitigation of the rigor of the sentence.

Let us relate still another example of the chastisements reserved for worldlings in Purgatory, when they have not, like the rich glutton of the Gospel, been buried in Hell.

Blessed Mary Villani, a Dominican Religious (*Sa Vie*, par Marchi, i, 2, c. 5; *Merv.*, 41), had a lively devotion to the holy souls, and it often happened that they appeared to her, either to thank her or to beg the assistance of her prayers and good works. One day, whilst praying for them with great fervor, she was transported in spirit to their prison of expiation. Among the souls that suffered there she saw one more cruelly tormented than the others, in the midst of flames which entirely enveloped her. Touched with compassion, the servant of God interrogated the soul. "I have been here," she replied, "for a very long time, punished for my vanity and my scandalous extravagance. Thus far I have not received the least alleviation. Whilst I was upon earth, being wholly occupied with my toilet, my pleasures, and worldly amusements, I thought very little of my duties as a Christian, and fulfilled them only with great reluctance, and in a slothful manner. My only serious thought was to further the worldly interests of my family. See now how I am punished: they bestow not so much as a passing thought upon me: my parents, my children, those friends with whom I was most intimate—all have

forgotten me.”

Mary Villani begged this soul to allow her to feel something of what she suffered, and immediately it appeared as though a finger of fire touched her forehead, and the pain which she experienced instantly caused her ecstasy to cease. The mark remained, and so deep and painful was it that two months afterwards it was still to be seen, and caused the holy Religious most terrible suffering. She endured this pain in the spirit of penance, for the relief of the soul that had appeared to her, and some time later the same soul came to announce her deliverance.

Chapter 30

Matter of Expiation—Sins of Youth—St. Catherine of Sweden and the Princess Gida.

IT often happens that Christians do not sufficiently reflect on the necessity of doing penance for the sins of their youth: they must one day be atoned for by the most rigorous penance of Purgatory. Such was the case with the Princess Gida, daughterinlaw of St. Bridget, as we read in the *Lives of the Saints*, March 24, Life of St. Catherine. (Cf. *Merv.*, 823). St. Bridget was in Rome with her daughter Catherine, when the latter had an apparition of the soul of her sisterinlaw, Gida, of whose death she was ignorant. Being one day in prayer in the ancient basilica of St. Peter, Catherine saw before her a woman dressed in a white robe and black mantle, and who came to ask her prayers for a person who was dead. “It is one of your countrywomen,” she added, “who needs your assistance.” “Her name?” asked the saint. “It is the Princess Gida of Sweden, the wife of your brother Charles.” Catherine then begged the stranger to accompany her to her mother Bridget, to impart to her the sad tidings. “I am charged with a message for you alone,” said the stranger, “and I am not allowed to make any other visits, for I must depart immediately. You have no reason to doubt the truth of this fact; in a few days another messenger will arrive from Sweden, bringing the gold crown of Princess Gida. She has bequeathed it to you by testament, in order to secure the assistance of your prayers; but extend to her from this very moment your charitable aid, for she stands in most urgent need of your suffrages.” With these words she withdrew.

Catherine would have followed her; but although her costume would have easily distinguished her, she was nowhere to be seen.

Struck and surprised with this strange adventure, she hastened to return to her mother, and related all that had happened. St. Bridget replied with a smile, “It was your sisterinlaw Gida herself that appeared to you. Our Lord has been pleased to reveal this to me. The dear departed died in the most consoling sentiments of piety; that is why she attained the favor of appearing to you asking your prayers. She has still to expiate the numerous faults of her

youth. Let us both do all in our power to give her relief. The gold crown which she sends you imposes this obligation upon you.”

A few weeks later an officer from the court of Prince Charles arrived in Rome, carrying the crown, and believing himself to be the first to convey the tidings of the death of Princess Gida. The beautiful crown was sold, and the money used for Masses and good works for the repose of the soul of the deceased Princess.

Chapter 31

Matter of Expiation—Scandal given—Immodest Paintings— Father Zucci and the Novice.

THOSE who have had the misfortune to give bad example, and to wound or cause the perdition of souls by scandal, must take care to repair all in this world, if they would not be subjected to the most terrible expiation in the other. It was not in vain that Jesus Christ cried out, Woe to the world because of scandals! *Woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh!* (Matt. 18:7).

Hear what Father Rossignoli relates in his *Merveilles du Purgatoire*. (Merv., 24). A painter of great skill and otherwise exemplary life had once made a painting not at all conformable to the strict rules of Christian modesty. It was one of those paintings which, under the pretext of being works of art, are found in the best families, and the sight of which causes the loss of so many souls.

True art is an inspiration from Heaven, which elevates the soul to God; profane art, which appeals to the senses only, which presents to the eye nothing but the beauties of flesh and blood, is but an inspiration of the evil spirit; his works, brilliant though they may be, are not works of art, and the name is falsely attributed to them. They are the infamous productions of a corrupt imagination.

The artist of whom we speak had allowed himself to be misled in this point by bad example. Soon, however, renouncing this pernicious style, he confined himself to the production of religious pictures, or at least of those which were perfectly irreproachable. Finally, he was painting a large picture in the convent of the discalced Carmelites, when he was attacked by a mortal malady. Feeling that he was about to die, he asked the Prior to allow him to be interred in the church of the monastery, and bequeathed to the community his earnings, which amounted to a considerable sum of money, charging them to have Masses said for the repose of his soul. He died in pious sentiments, and a few days passed, when a Religious who had stayed in the choir after Matins saw him appear in the midst of flames and sighing

piteously.

“What!” said the Religious, “have you to endure such pain, after leading so good a life and dying so holy a death?” “Alas!” replied he, “it is on account of the immodest picture that I painted some years ago. When I appeared before the tribunal of the Sovereign Judge, a crowd of accusers came to give evidence against me. They declared that they had been excited to improper thoughts and evil desires by a picture, the work of my hand. In consequence of those bad thoughts some were in Purgatory, others in Hell. The latter cried for vengeance, saying that, having been the cause of their eternal perdition, I deserved, at least, the same punishment. Then the Blessed Virgin and the saints whom I had glorified by my pictures took up my defense. They represented to the Judge that that unfortunate painting had been the work of youth, and of which I had repented; that I had repaired it afterwards by religious objects which had been a source of edification to souls.

“In consideration of these and other reasons, the Sovereign Judge declared that, on account of my repentance and my good works, I should be exempt from damnation; but at the same time, He condemned me to these flames until that picture should be burned, so that it could no longer scandalize anyone.”

Then the poor sufferer implored the Religious to take measures to have the painting destroyed. “I beg of you,” he added, “go in my name to such a person, proprietor of the picture; tell him in what a condition I am for having yielded to his entreaties to paint it, and conjure him to make a sacrifice of it. If he refuses, woe to him! To prove that this is not an illusion, and to punish him for his own fault, tell him that before long he will lose his two children. Should he refuse to obey Him who has created us both, he will pay for it by a premature death.”

The Religious delayed not to do what the poor soul asked of him, and went to the owner of the picture. The latter, on hearing these things, seized the painting and cast it into the fire. Nevertheless, according to the words of the deceased, he lost his two children in less than a month. The remainder of his days he passed in penance, for having ordered and kept that immodest picture in his house.

If such are the consequences of an immodest picture, what, then, will be the punishment of the still more disastrous scandals resulting from bad books, bad papers, bad schools, and bad conversations? *Væ mundo a*

scandalis! Væ homini illi per quem scandalum venit! “Woe to the world because of scandals! Woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh!” (*Matt.* 18:7).

Scandal makes great ravages in souls by the seduction of innocence. Ah! those accursed seducers! They shall render to God a terrible account of the blood of their victims. We read the following in the Life of Father Nicholas Zucchi, written by Fr. Daniel Bartoli, of the Company of Jesus. (Cf. *Merv.*, 841).

The holy and zealous Father Zucchi, who died in Rome, May 21, 1670, had drawn to a life of perfection three young ladies, who consecrated themselves to God in the cloister. One of them, before leaving the world, had been sought in marriage by a young nobleman. After she had entered the novitiate, this gentleman, instead of respecting her holy vocation, continued to address letters to her whom he wished to call his betrothed, urging her to quit, as he said, the dull service of God, to embrace again the joys of life. The Father, meeting him one day in the streets, begged him to give up such conduct. “I assure you,” he said, “that before long you will appear before the tribunal of God, and it is high time for you to prepare yourself by sincere penance.”

In fact, a fortnight afterwards, this young man died, carried away by a rapid death, that left him little time to put the affairs of his conscience in order, so that there was everything to fear for his salvation.

One evening, whilst the three novices were engaged together in holy conversation, the youngest was called away to the parlor. There she found a man wrapped in a heavy cloak, and with measured steps pacing the room. “Sir,” she said, “who are you? and why did you send for me?” The stranger, without answering, drew near and threw aside the mysterious mantle which covered him. The Religious then recognized the unfortunate deceased, and saw with horror that he was entirely surrounded by chains of fire that clasped his neck, wrists, knees, and ankles. “*Pray for me!*” he cried, and disappeared. This miraculous manifestation showed that God had had mercy upon him at the last moment; that he had not been damned, but that he paid for his attempt at seduction by a terrible Purgatory.

Chapter 32

Matter of Expiation—The Life of Pleasure—The Pursuit of Comfort—Venerable Frances of Pampeluna and the Man of the World—St. Elizabeth and the Queen, her Mother.

IN our days there are Christians who are total strangers to the Cross and the mortification of Jesus Christ. Their effeminate and sensual life is but one chain of pleasures; they fear everything that is a sacrifice; scarcely do they observe the strict laws of fasting and abstinence prescribed by the Church. Since they will not submit to any penance in this world, let them reflect on what will be inflicted upon them in the next. It is certain that in this worldly life they do nothing but accumulate debts. Since they omit to do penance, no part of the debt is paid, and a total is reached that affrights the imagination. The venerable servant of God, Frances of Pampeluna, who was favored with several visions of Purgatory, saw one day a man of the world, who, although he had otherwise been a tolerably good Christian, passed fifty-nine years in Purgatory on account of seeking his ease and comfort. Another passed thirty-five years there for the same reason; a third, who had too strong a passion for gambling, was detained there for sixty-four years. Alas! these injudicious Christians have allowed their debts to remain before God, and those which they might so easily have acquitted by works of penance they have had to pay afterwards by years of torture.

If God is severe towards the rich and the pleasure-seekers of the world, He will not be less so towards princes, magistrates, parents, and in general towards all those who have the charge of souls and authority over others.

A severe judgment, says He Himself, shall be for them that bear rule. (Wis. 6:6).

Laurence Surius relates how an illustrious queen, after her death, bore witness to this truth. (*Merv.*, 93). In the Life of St. Elizabeth, Duchess of Thuringia, it is said that the servant of God lost her mother, Gertrude, Queen of Hungary, about the year 1220. In the spirit of a holy Christian daughter, she gave abundant alms, redoubled her prayers and mortifications, exhausted the resources of her charity for the relief of that dear soul. God revealed to

her that she had not done too much. One night the deceased appeared to her with a sad and emaciated countenance; she placed herself on her knees next to the bed, and said to her, weeping, "My daughter, you see at your feet your mother overwhelmed with suffering. I come to implore you to multiply your suffrages, that Divine Mercy may deliver me from the frightful torments I endure. Oh! how much are those to be pitied who exercise authority over others? I expiate now the faults that I committed upon the throne. Oh! my daughter, I pray you by the pangs I endured when bringing you into the world, by the cares and anxieties which your education cost me, I conjure you to deliver me from my torments." Elizabeth, deeply touched, arose immediately, took the discipline to blood, and implored God, with tears, to have mercy on her mother, Gertrude, declaring that she would not cease to pray until she had obtained her deliverance. Her prayers were heard.

Let us here remark that, in the preceding example, there is spoken of a queen only; how much more severely will kings, magistrates, and all superiors be treated whose responsibility and influence are much greater!

Chapter 33

Matter of Expiation—Tepidity—St. Bernard and the Religious of Citeaux—Venerable Mother Agnes and Sister de Haut Villars—Father Surin and the Religious of Loudun.

GOOD Christians, Priests, and Religious, who wish to serve God with their whole hearts, must avoid the rock of tepidity and negligence. God will be served with fervor; those who are tepid and careless excite His disgust; He even goes so far as to threaten with His malediction those who perform holy actions in a careless manner—that is to say, He will severely punish in Purgatory all negligence in His service.

Among the disciples of St. Bernard, who perfumed the celebrated valley of Clairvaux with the odor of their sanctity, there was one whose negligence sadly contrasted with the fervor of his brethren. Notwithstanding his double character of Priest and of Religious, he allowed himself to sink into a deplorable state of tepidity. The moment of death arrived, and he was summoned before God without having given any token of amendment.

Whilst the Mass of Requiem was being celebrated, a venerable Religious of uncommon virtue learned by an interior light, that though the deceased was not eternally lost, his soul was in a most miserable condition. The following night the soul appeared to him in a sad and wretched condition. “Yesterday,” he said, “you learned my deplorable fate; behold now the tortures to which I am condemned in punishment for my culpable tepidity.” He then conducted the old man to the edge of a large, deep pit, filled with smoke and flames. “Behold the place,” said he, “where the ministers of Divine Justice have orders to torment me; they cease not to plunge me into this abyss, and draw me out only to precipitate me into it again, without giving me one moment’s respite.”

The next morning the Religious went to St. Bernard to make known to him his vision. The holy Abbot, who had had a similar apparition, received it as a warning from Heaven to his community. He convened a Chapter, and with tearful eyes related the double vision, exhorting his Religious to succor their poor departed brother by their charitable suffrages, and to profit by this

sad example to preserve their fervor, and to avoid the least negligence in the service of God. (Rossign., *Merv.*, 47).

The following instance is related by M. de Lantages in the Life of Venerable Mother Agnes of Langeac, a Dominican Religious. Whilst this Religious was one day praying in choir, a Religious whom she did not know suddenly appeared before her, miserably clad and with a countenance expressive of the deepest grief. She looked at her with astonishment, asking herself who it might be; when she heard the voice say distinctly, "*It is Sister de Haut Villars.*"

Sister de Haut Villars had been a Religious in the monastery at Puy, and had died about ten years previous to this vision. The apparition said not a word, but showed sufficiently by her sad countenance how greatly she stood in need of assistance.

Mother Agnes understood this perfectly, and began from that day to offer most fervent prayers for the relief of this soul. The deceased was not content with the first visit; she continued to appear for the space of three weeks, almost everywhere and at all times, especially after Holy Communion and prayer, manifesting her sufferings by the doleful expression of her countenance.

Agnes, by the advice of her confessor, without speaking of the apparition, asked her Prioress to allow the community to offer extra prayers for the dead, for her intention. Since, notwithstanding these prayers, the apparitions continued, she greatly feared some delusion. God, however, deigned to remove this fear. He clearly made known to His charitable servant, by the voice of her angel guardian, *that it was really a soul from Purgatory, and that she thus suffered for her negligence in the service of God.* From the moment these words were uttered, the apparitions ceased, and it is not known how long that unfortunate soul may have had to remain in Purgatory. Let us cite another example, qualified to stimulate the fervor of the faithful. A holy Religious named Mary of the Incarnation, of the convent of the Ursulines, in Loudun, appeared some time after her death to her Superior, a woman of intelligence and merit, who wrote the details of the apparition to Father Surin of the Company of Jesus. "On November 6th," she wrote, "between three and four o'clock in the morning, Mother of the Incarnation stood before me, with an expression of sweetness on her countenance that appeared more like that of humility than of suffering; yet I saw that she suffered much. When I first perceived her near me, I was seized

with great fright, but as there was nothing about her that inspired fear, I soon felt reassured. I asked her in what state she was, and if we could render her any service. She replied, 'I satisfy Divine Justice in Purgatory.' I begged her to tell me why she was detained there. Then with a deep sigh she answered, 'It is for being negligent in several common exercises; a certain weakness by which I allowed myself to be led by the example of imperfect Religious; finally, and especially, the habit which I had of retaining in my possession things of which I had no permission to dispose, and of making use of them to suit my needs and natural inclinations. Ah! if Religious knew,' continued the good Mother, 'the wrong they do their souls by not applying themselves to perfection, and how dearly they shall one day expiate the satisfactions which they give themselves contrary to the light of their consciences, their efforts to do violence to themselves during life would be very different. Ah! God's point of view is different from ours, His judgments are different.'

"I asked her again if we could do anything to relieve her sufferings. She replied, 'I desire to see and possess God, but I am content to satisfy His Justice as long as it shall please Him.' I asked her to tell me whether she suffered much. 'My pains,' she replied, 'are incomprehensible to those who do not feel them.' Saying these words, she drew near my face to take leave of me. It seemed as though I was burned by a coal of fire, although her face did not touch mine; and my arm, which had barely grazed her mantle, was burned and caused me considerable pain."

A month later she appeared to the same Superior to announce her deliverance.

Chapter 34

Matter of Expiation—Negligence in Holy Communion—Louis of Blois—St. Magdalen de Pazzi and the Departed Soul in Adoration.

TO tepidity is allied negligence in the preparation for the Eucharistic Banquet. If the Church unceasingly calls her children to the Holy Table, if she desires that they communicate frequently, she always intends that they should do so with that fervor and piety which so great a mystery demands. All voluntary neglect in so holy an action is an offense to the Sanctity of Jesus Christ, an offense which must be repaired by a just expiation. Venerable Louis of Blois, in his *Miroir Spirituel*, speaks of a great servant of God who learned in a supernatural manner how severely these faults are punished in the other life. He received a visit from a soul in Purgatory imploring his aid in name of the friendship by which they had formerly been united. She endured, she said, horrible torments, for the negligence with which she had prepared for Holy Communion during the days of her earthly pilgrimage. She could not be delivered but by a fervent Communion which would compensate for her former tepidity.

Her friend hastened to gratify her desire, received Holy Communion with great purity of conscience, with all the faith and devotion possible; and then she saw the holy soul appear, brilliant with an incomparable splendor, and rise towards Heaven. (*Merv.*, 44).

In the year 1589, in the monastery of St. Mary of the Angels, in Florence, died a Religious who was much esteemed by her sisters in religion, but who soon appeared to St. Magdalen de Pazzi to implore her assistance in the rigorous Purgatory to which she was condemned. The saint was in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament when she perceived the deceased kneeling in the middle of the church in an attitude of profound adoration. She had around her a mantle of flames that seemed to consume her, but a white robe that covered her body protected her in part from the action of the fire. Greatly astonished, Magdalen desired to know what this signified, and she was answered that this soul suffered thus for having had little devotion

toward the August Sacrament of the Altar. Notwithstanding the rules and holy customs of her Order, she had communicated but rarely, and then with indifference. It was for this reason Divine Justice had condemned her to come every day to adore the Blessed Sacrament, and to submit to the torture of fire at the feet of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, in reward for her virginal purity, represented by the white robe, her Divine Spouse had greatly mitigated her sufferings.

Such was the revelation which God made to His servant. She was deeply touched, and made every effort to assist the poor soul by all the suffrages in her power. She often related this apparition, and made use of it to exhort her spiritual daughters to zeal for Holy Communion.

Chapter 35

Matter of Expiation—Want of Respect in Prayer—Mother Agnes of Jesus and Sr. Angelique—St. Severin of Cologne—Venerable Frances of Pampeluna and the Priests—Father Streit, S. J.

WE should treat holy things in a holy manner. All irreverence in religious exercises is extremely displeasing to God. When the Venerable Agnes of Langeac, of whom we have already spoken, was Prioress of her convent, she very much recommended to her Religious respect and fervor in their relations with God, reminding them of these words of Holy Scripture, *Accursed be he that doth the work of God with negligence*. A sister of the community named Angelique died. The pious Superior was praying near her tomb, when she suddenly saw the deceased sister before her, dressed in the religious habit; she felt at the same time as though a flame of fire touched her face. Sister Angelique thanked her for having stimulated her to fervor, and particularly for having frequently made her repeat during life these words, *Accursed be he that doth the work of God with negligence*. “Continue, Mother,” she added, “to urge the sisters to fervor; let them serve God with the utmost diligence, love Him with their whole heart, and with all the power of their soul. If they could but understand how rigorous are the torments of Purgatory, they would never be guilty of the least neglect.”

The foregoing warning regards in a special manner priests, whose relations with God are continual and more sublime. Let them, therefore, remember it always, and never forget it, whether they offer to God the incense of prayer, whether they dispense the Divine Treasures of the Sacraments, or whether at the altar they celebrate the mysteries of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. See what St. Peter Damian relates in his 14th Letter to Desiderius. (Cf. *Merv.*, 37).

St. Severin, Archbishop of Cologne, edified his church by an example of all virtues. His apostolic life, his great labors for the extension of God’s kingdom in souls, have merited for him the honors of canonization. Nevertheless, after his death he appeared to one of the canons of his

cathedral to ask for prayers. This worthy priest not being able to understand that a holy prelate, such as he had known Severin to be, could stand the need of prayers in the other life, the deceased Bishop replied, "It is true God gave me grace to serve Him with all my heart and to labor in His vineyard, but I often offended Him by the haste with which I recited the Holy Office. The occupations of each day so absorbed my attention, that when the hour of prayer came, I acquitted myself of that great duty without recollection, and sometimes at another hour than that appointed by the Church. At this moment I am expiating those infidelities, and God permits me to come and ask your prayers." The biography adds that Severin was six months in Purgatory for that one fault.

Venerable Sister Frances of Pampeluna, whom we have before mentioned, one day saw in Purgatory a poor priest whose fingers were eaten away by frightful ulcers. He was thus punished for having at the altar made the Sign of the Cross with too much levity, and without the necessary gravity. She said that in general priests remain in Purgatory longer than laymen, and that the intensity of their torments is in proportion to their dignity. God revealed to her the fate of several deceased priests. One of them had to undergo forty years of suffering for having by his neglect allowed a person to die without the Sacraments; another remained there for forty-five years for having performed the sublime functions of his ministry with a certain levity. A Bishop, whose liberality had caused him to be named almoner, was detained there for five years for having sought that dignity; another, not so charitable, was condemned for forty years for the same reason. (*Vie de la Vénér. Mère Franc. Cf. Merv.*, 25).

God wills that we should serve Him with our whole heart, and that we should avoid, in so far as the frailty of human nature will permit, even the slightest imperfections; but the care to please Him and the fear of displeasing Him must be accompanied by a humble confidence in His mercy.

Jesus Christ has admonished us to hear those whom He has appointed in His place to be our spiritual guides as we should Himself, and to follow the advice of our superior or confessor with perfect confidence. Thus an excessive fear is an offense against His Mercy.

On November 12, 1643, Father Philip Streit, of the Society of Jesus, a Religious of great sanctity, died at the Novitiate of Brünn in Bohemia. Every day he made his examination of conscience with the greatest care, and acquired by this means great purity of soul. Some hours after his death, he

appeared all radiant to one of the Fathers of his Order, Venerable Martin Strzeda. “One single fault,” he said, “prevents me from going to Heaven, and detains me eight hours in Purgatory; it is that of not having sufficiently confided in the words of my Superior, who, in the last moments of my life, strove to calm some little trouble of conscience. I ought to have regarded his words as the voice of God Himself.”

Chapter 36

Matter of Expiation and Chastisement—Immortification of the Senses—Father Francis of Aix—Immortification of the Tongue—Durand.

CHRISTIANS who wish to escape the rigors of Purgatory must love the mortification of their Divine Master, and beware of being delicate members under a Head crowned with thorns. On February 10, 1656, in the province of Lyons, Father Francis of Aix, of the Society of Jesus, passed away to a better life. He carried all the virtues of a Religious to a high degree of perfection. Penetrated with a profound veneration towards the Most Blessed Trinity, he had for particular intention in all his prayers and mortifications to honor this August Mystery; to embrace by preference those works for which others showed less inclination, had a particular charm for him. He often visited the Blessed Sacrament, even during the night, and never left the door of his room without going to say a prayer at the foot of the altar. His penances, which were in a manner excessive, gave him the name of the *man of suffering*. He replied to one who advised him to moderate them, *“The day which I should allow to pass without shedding some drops of my blood to offer to my God would be for me the most painful and the severest mortification. Since I cannot hope to suffer martyrdom for the love of Jesus Christ, I will at least have some part in His sufferings.”*

Another Religious, Brother Coadjutor of the same Order, did not imitate the example of this good Father. He had little love for mortification, but, on the contrary, sought his ease and comfort, and all that could gratify the senses. This brother, some days after his death, appeared to Father d’Aix, clothed in frightful haircloth, and suffering great torments, in punishment for the faults of sensuality which he had committed during life. He implored the assistance of his prayers, and immediately disappeared.

Another fault against which we must guard, because we so easily fall into it, is the unmortification of the tongue. Oh! how easy it is to err in words! How rare a thing it is to speak for any length of time without offending against meekness, humility, sincerity, or Christian charity! Even pious

persons are often subject to this defect; when they have escaped all the other snares of the demon, they allow themselves to be taken, says St. Jerome, in this last trap—slander. Let us listen to what is related by Vincent de Beauvais. (*Specul. Historiale*, 1. 26, c. 5: cf. *Merv.*, 37).

When the celebrated Durand, who, in the eleventh century, shed luster on the Order of St. Dominic, was yet a simple Religious, he showed himself a model of regularity and fervor; yet he had one defect. The vivacity of his disposition led him to talk too much; he was excessively fond of witty expressions, often at the expense of charity. Hugh, his Abbot, brought this under his notice, even predicting that, if he did not correct himself of this fault, he would certainly have to expiate it in Purgatory. Durand did not attach sufficient importance to this advice, and continued to give himself, without much restraint, to the disorders of the tongue. After his death, the prediction of the Abbot Hugh was fulfilled. Durand appeared to a Religious, one of his friends, imploring him to assist him by his prayers, because he was frightfully punished for the unmortification of his tongue. In consequence of this apparition, the members of the community unanimously agreed to observe strict silence for eight days, and to practice other good works for the repose of the deceased. These charitable exercises produced their effect; some time after Durand again appeared, but now to announce his deliverance.

Chapter 37

Matter of Expiation—Intemperance of the Tongue—The Dominican Father—Sisters Gertrude and Margaret—St. Hugh of Cluny and the Infringer of the Rule of Science.

WE have just seen how immoderation in the use of words is expiated in Purgatory. Father P. Rossignoli speaks of a Dominican Religious who incurred the chastisements of Divine Justice for a like defect. This Religious, a preacher full of zeal, a glory to his Order, appeared after his death to one of his brethren at Cologne. He was clad in magnificent robes, wearing a crown of gold upon his head, but his tongue was fearfully tormented. These ornaments represented the recompense of his zeal for souls and his perfect exactitude in all the points of his Rule. Nevertheless, his tongue was tortured because he had not been sufficiently guarded in his words, and his language was not always becoming the sacred lips of a priest and a Religious.

The following instance is drawn from Cesarius. (*Dial. de Miraculis*). In a monastery of the Order of Citeaux, says this author, lived two young Religious, named Gertrude and her sister Margaret. The former, although otherwise virtuous, did not sufficiently watch over her tongue; she frequently allowed herself to transgress the rule of silence prescribed, sometimes even in choir, before and after the chanting of the Office. Instead of recollecting herself with the reverence due to that holy place, she addressed useless words to her sister, who was placed next to her, so that, besides her violation of the rule of silence and her lack of piety, she was a subject of disedification to her companion. She died whilst still young, and a very short time after her death, Sister Margaret, on going to Office, saw her come and place herself in the same stall she had occupied whilst living.

At this sight the sister was almost about to faint. When she had sufficiently recovered from her astonishment, she went and told the Superior what she had just seen. The Superior told her not to be troubled, but, should the deceased appear again, to ask her, in the name of God, why she came.

She reappeared the next day in the same way, and, according to the order

of the Prioress, Margaret said to her, "My dear Sister Gertrude, whence do you come, and what do you want?" "I come," she said, "to satisfy the Justice of God in this place where I have sinned. It was here, in this holy sanctuary, that I offended God by words, both useless and contrary to religious respect, by disedification to all, and by the scandal which I have given to you in particular. Oh, if you knew," she added, "what I suffer! I am devoured by flames, my tongue especially is dreadfully tormented." She then disappeared, after having asked for prayers.

When St. Hugh, who succeeded St. Odilo in 1049, governed the fervent monastery of Cluny, one of his Religious, who had been careless in the observance of the rule of silence, having died, appeared to the holy Abbot to beg the assistance of his prayers. His mouth was filled with frightful ulcers, in punishment, he said, for idle words. Hugh imposed seven days of silence upon his community. They were passed in recollection and prayer. Then the deceased reappeared, freed from his ulcers, his countenance radiant, and testifying his gratitude for the charitable succor he had received from his brethren. If such is the chastisement of idle words, what will be that of words more culpable?

Chapter 38

Matter of Expiation—Failure in matters of Justice—Father d’Espinoza and the Payments—Blessed Margaret of Cortona and the Assassinated Merchants.

A MULTITUDE of revelations show us that God chastises with implacable rigor all sins contrary to Justice and Charity; and in matters of Justice He seems to exact that reparation be made before the penalty is remitted; as in the Church Militant her ministers must exact restitution in order to remit the guilt, according to the axiom, *Without restitution no remission*.

Father P. Rossignoli speaks of a Religious of his Order, named Augustin d’Espinoza, whose saintly life was but one act of devotion to the souls in Purgatory. A rich man who went to him to Confession, having died without having sufficiently regulated his affairs, appeared to him, and asked him first if he knew him. (*Merv.*, 92).

“Certainly,” replied the Father; “I administered the Sacrament of Penance to you a few days before your death.” “You must know, then,” added the soul, “that I come to you by a special grace of God, to conjure you to appease His Justice, and to do for me that which I can no longer do for myself. Follow me.”

The Father first went to see his Superior, to tell him what was asked of him, and to obtain permission to follow the strange visitor. The permission obtained, he went out and followed the apparition, who, without uttering a single word, led him to one of the bridges of the city. There it begged the Father to wait a little, disappeared for a moment, then returned with a bag of money, which it begged the Father to carry, and both returned to the cell of the Religious. Then the deceased gave him a written note, and showed him the money. “All this,” said he, “is at your disposal. Have the charity to take it, that you may satisfy my creditors, whose names are written upon this paper, with the amount due to each. Be pleased to take what remains and use it for good works at your own discretion, for the repose of my soul.” With these words he disappeared, and the Father hastened to carry out his wishes.

Eight days had scarcely elapsed when Father d'Espinoza received another visit from the same soul. He thanked the Father most heartily. "Thanks to the charitable exactitude," he said, "with which you have paid the debts that I left on earth, thanks also to the Holy Masses which you have celebrated for me, I am delivered from all my sufferings, and am admitted into eternal beatitude." We find an example of the same kind in the Life of Blessed Margaret of Cortona. This illustrious penitent also distinguished herself by her charity towards the departed souls. They appeared to her in great numbers, to implore her assistance and suffrages. One day, among others, she saw before her two travellers, who begged her to assist them in repairing the injustices left to their account. "We are two merchants," they told her, "who have been assassinated on the road by brigands. We could not go to Confession or receive absolution; but by the mercy of our Divine Saviour and His Holy Mother, we had the time to make an act of perfect contrition, and we have been saved. But our torments in Purgatory are terrible, because in the exercise of our profession we have committed many acts of injustice. Until these acts are repaired we can have no repose nor alleviation. This is why we beseech you, servant of God, to go and find such and such of our relatives and heirs, to warn them to make restitution as soon as possible of all the money which we have unjustly acquired." They gave the holy penitent the necessary information and disappeared. (*Actes des Saints*, Feb. 22).

Chapter 39

Matter of Expiation—Sins against Charity—Blessed Margaret Mary—Two Persons of Rank in the Pains of Purgatory—Several Souls Punished for Discord.

WE have already said that Divine Justice is extremely severe in regard to sins against Charity. Charity is, in fact, the virtue which is dearest to the Heart of our Divine Master, and which He recommends to His disciples as that which must distinguish them in the eyes of men. By this, He says, *shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another.* (John 13:35). It is, then, not astonishing that harshness towards our neighbor, and every other fault against Charity, should be severely punished in the other life.

Of this we have several proofs, taken from the Life of Blessed Margaret Mary. “I learned from Sister Margaret,” says Mother Greffier in her Memoirs, “that she one day prayed for two persons of high rank in the world who had just died. She saw them both in Purgatory. The one was condemned for several years to those sufferings, notwithstanding the great number of Masses which were celebrated for her. All those prayers and suffrages were by Divine Justice applied to the souls belonging to some of the families of her subjects, which had been ruined by their injustice and lack of charity. As nothing was left to those poor people to enable them to have prayers offered for them after their death, God compensated these poor people in the manner we have related. The other was in Purgatory for as many days as she had lived years upon earth. Our Lord made known to Sister Margaret that, among the good works which this person had performed, He had taken into special consideration the Charity with which she had borne the faults of her neighbor, and the pains she had taken to overcome the displeasure they had caused her.”

On another occasion Our Lord showed Blessed Margaret a large number of souls in Purgatory, who, for not having been united with their Superiors during their life, and for having had some misunderstanding with them, had been severely punished and deprived after death of the aid of the Blessed

Virgin and the Saints, and also of the visits of their angel guardians. Several of those souls were destined to remain for a long time in horrible flames. Some even among them had no other token of their predestination than that they did not hate God. Others, who had been in religion, and who during life showed little charity towards their sisters, were deprived of their sufferings, and received no assistance whatsoever.

Let us add one more extract from the Memoirs of Mother Greffier. “It happened whilst Sister Margaret was praying for two deceased Religious, that their souls were shown to her in the prisons of Divine Justice, but one suffered incomparably more than the other. The former regretted greatly that by her faults against mutual Charity, and the holy friendship that ought to remain in religious communities, she had in part deprived herself, among other punishments, of the suffrages which were offered for her by the community. She received relief only from the prayers of three or four persons of the same community for whom she had had less affection and inclination during her life. This suffering soul reproached herself also for the too great facility with which she took dispensations from the rules and exercises of the community. Finally, she deplored the care which she had taken upon earth to procure for her body so many comforts and commodities. She made known at the same time to our dear Sister that, in punishment for three faults, she had to undergo three furious assaults of the demon during her last agony, and that each time believing herself lost, she was on the point of falling into despair, but by the Blessed Virgin, towards whom she had borne great devotion during her life, she had been snatched three times from the claws of the enemy.”

Chapter 40

Matter of Expiation—Lack of Charity and of Respect towards our Neighbor—St. Louis Bertrand and the Departed Soul asking Pardon—Father Nieremberg—Blessed Margaret Mary and the Benedictine Religious.

TRUE Charity is humble and indulgent towards others, respecting them as though they were their superiors. Her words are always friendly, and full of consideration for others, having nothing of bitterness nor coldness, nothing savoring of contempt, because she is born of a heart that is meek and humble like that of Jesus. She also carefully avoids all that could disturb unity; she takes every means, makes every sacrifice to effect a reconciliation, according to the words of our Divine Master, *If thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee, leave there thy offering before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother, and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift.* (Matt. 5:23).

A Religious having wounded Charity in regard to St. Louis Bertrand, received a terrible chastisement after death. He was plunged into the fire of Purgatory, which he had to endure until he had made satisfaction to Divine Justice; nay, more, he could not be admitted into the abode of the elect until he had accomplished an act of exterior reparation, which should serve as an example to the living. The fact is thus related in the Life of the saint:

When St. Louis Bertrand, of the Order of St. Dominic, resided at the convent of Valencia, there was a young Religious in the community who attached too much importance to profane science. Doubtless letters and erudition have their value, but, as the Holy Ghost declares, they should yield to the fear of God and the science of the saints. *Non super timentem Dominum*— “There is none above him that feareth the Lord.” (*Ecclus.* 25:13). This science of the saints, which Eternal Wisdom came to teach us, consists in Humility and Charity. The young Religious of whom we speak, while but little advanced in Divine science, allowed himself to reproach Father Bertrand with his little knowledge, and said to him, “*One can see,*

Father, that you are not very learned!” “Brother,” replied the saint with meek firmness, “Lucifer was very learned, and yet he was damned.”

The brother who had committed this fault did not think of repairing it. Nevertheless, he was not a bad Religious, and some time after, falling dangerously sick, he received the last Sacrament in very good dispositions, and expired peacefully in the Lord. A considerable time elapsed, and meanwhile Louis was nominated Prior. One day, having remained in choir after Matins, the deceased appeared to him enveloped in flames, and prostrating humbly before him, said, “Father, pardon me the offensive words which I formerly addressed to you. God will not permit me to see His face until you shall have pardoned my fault and offered Holy Mass for me.” The saint willingly forgave him, and the next morning celebrated Mass for the repose of his soul. The following night, being again in choir, he saw the deceased brother reappear, but radiant with glory and going up to Heaven. (*Acta Sanctor.*, Oct. 10).

Father Eusebius Nieremberg, Religious of the Company of Jesus, author of the beautiful book, *Difference between Time and Eternity*, resided at the College of Madrid, where he died in the odor of sanctity in 1658. This servant of God, who was singularly devout towards the souls in Purgatory, was praying one day in the church of the college for a Father who had recently died. The deceased, who for a long time had been a professor of theology, had proved himself to be as good a Religious as he was a learned theologian; he had been distinguished for his great devotion to the Blessed Virgin, but one vice had crept in among his virtues—he was uncharitable in his words, and frequently spoke of the faults of his neighbor. Now, whilst Father Nieremberg was recommending his soul to God, this Religious appeared, and revealed to him the state of his soul. He was condemned to frightful torments for having frequently spoken against charity. His tongue, the instrument of his fault, was tortured by a devouring fire. The Blessed Virgin, in recompense for the tender devotion which he had cherished towards her, had obtained permission for him to come and ask for prayers; he was, at the same time, to serve as an example to others, that they might learn to be guarded in all their words. Father Nieremberg, having offered many prayers and penances for him, finally obtained his deliverance. (Life of P. Nieremberg).

The Religious of whom mention is made in the Life of Blessed Margaret Mary, and for whom that servant of God suffered so terribly for the space of

three months, among other faults, was also punished for his sins against Charity. The revelation is thus related:

Blessed Margaret Mary, we read in her Life, being one day before the Blessed Sacrament, suddenly saw before her a man totally enveloped in fire, the intense heat of which seemed about to consume herself. The wretched state in which she saw this poor soul caused her to shed tears. He was a Benedictine Religious of the monastery of Cluny, to whom she had formerly confessed, and who had done good to her soul by ordering her to receive Holy Communion. In reward for this service, God had permitted him to address himself to her, that he might find some alleviation in his sufferings.

The poor departed asked that all she should do and suffer for the space of three months might be applied to him. This she promised, after having obtained permission. Then he told her that the principal cause of his intense suffering was for having sought his own interests before the glory of God and the good of souls, by attaching too much importance to his reputation. The second was his want of charity towards his brethren. The third, the natural affection for creatures to whom, through weakness, he had yielded, and to which he had given expression in his spiritual intercourse with them, “this being,” he added, “very displeasing to God.”

It is difficult to say all that the Blessed Sister had to suffer during the three months following. The deceased never left her. On the side where he stood she seemed all on fire, with such excruciating pain, that she could not cease to weep. Her Superior, touched with compassion, ordered her penances and disciplines, because pain and suffering greatly relieved her. The torments which the Sanctity of God inflicted upon her were insupportable. It was a specimen of the suffering endured by the poor souls.

Chapter 41

Matter of Expiation—Abuse of Grace—St. Magdalen de Pazzi and the Dead Religious—Blessed Margaret Mary and the Three Souls in Purgatory.

THERE is another disorder in the soul which God punishes severely in Purgatory, to wit, the abuse of grace. By this is understood the neglect to correspond to the aids which God gives us, and to the invitations which He presses upon us to the practice of virtue for the sanctification of our souls. This grace which He offers us is a precious gift, which we may not throw away; it is the seed of salvation and of merit, which it is not permitted to leave unproductive. Now, this fault is committed when we do not respond with generosity to the Divine invitation. I receive from God the means of giving alms; an interior voice invites me to do so. I close my heart, or I give with a miserly hand; this is an abuse of grace. I can hear Mass, assist at the sermon, frequent the Sacraments; an interior voice urges me to go, but I will not give myself the trouble. This, again, is an abuse of grace.

A young Religious must be obedient, humble, mortified, devoted to her duties; God requires this, and gives her the grace in virtue of her vocation. She does not apply herself thereto; she does not labor to overcome herself, in order to cooperate with the assistance which God gives her; this is an abuse of grace.

Now this sin, as we have said, is severely punished in Purgatory. St. Magdalen de Pazzi tells us that one of her sisters in religion had much to suffer after death for not having on three occasions corresponded to grace. It happened that on a certain feast day she felt inclined to do some little work; it was only some simple piece of embroidery, but it was not at all necessary, and could be conveniently postponed to some other time. The inspiration of grace told her to abstain from it

Part Two

Purgatory, The Mystery of God's Mercy

Chapter 1

Fear and Confidence—The Mercy of God—St. Lidwina and the Priest—Venerable Claude de la Colombière.

WE have just considered the rigors of Divine Justice in the other life; they are terrific, and it is impossible to think of them without trembling. That fire, enkindled by Divine Justice, those excruciating pains, compared to which all the penances of the saints, all the sufferings of the martyrs put together, are as nothing, who is there that thinks he will be able to look upon them and not shudder from very fear?

This fear is salutary and conformable to the spirit of Jesus Christ. Our Divine Master desires that we should fear, and that we should fear not only Hell, but also Purgatory, which is a sort of mitigated Hell. It is to inspire us with this holy fear that He shows us the dungeons of the Supreme Judge, whence we shall not depart until we have paid the last farthing. (*Matt.* 5:26). We may say of the fire of Purgatory that which is said of Hell fire: *Fear ye not them that kill the body and are not able to kill the soul, but rather fear him that can cast both soul and body into Hell.* (*Matt.* 10:28). Yet it is not the intention of Our Lord that we should have an excessive and barren fear, a fear which tortures and discourages, a gloomy fear without confidence. No; He wishes that our fear should be tempered with great trust in His mercy; He desires that we should fear evil in order to prevent and avoid it; He desires that the thought of those avenging flames should stimulate us to fervor in His service, and cause us to expiate our faults in this world rather than in the other. “*Better is it to purge away our sins, and cut off our vices now,*” says the author of the *Imitation*, “*than to keep them for purgation hereafter.*” (*Imit.* 1, 24). Moreover, if, notwithstanding our endeavors to live well, and to satisfy for our sins in this world, we have wellgrounded fears that we shall have to undergo a Purgatory, we must look forward to that contingency with unbounded confidence in God, who never fails to console those whom He purifies by sufferings.

Now, to give our fear this practical character, this counterpoise of confidence, after having contemplated Purgatory in all the rigor of its pains,

we must consider it under another aspect and from a different point of view—that of the Mercy of God, which shines forth therein no less than His Justice.

If God reserves terrible chastisements in the other life for the least faults, He does not inflict them without, at the same time, tempering them with clemency; and nothing shows better the admirable harmony of the Divine perfection than Purgatory, because the most severe Justice is there exercised, together with the most ineffable Mercy. If Our Lord chastises those souls that are dear to Him, it is in His love, according to the words, *Such as I love I rebuke and chastise.* (Apoc. 3:19). With one hand He strikes, with the other He heals. He offers mercy and redemption in abundance: *Quoniam apud Dominum misericordia, et copiosa apud eum redemptio.* (Ps. 129).

This infinite Mercy of our Heavenly Father must be the firm foundation of our confidence; and, after the example of the saints, we must keep it always before our eyes. The saints never lost sight of it; and it was for this reason that the fear of Purgatory never deprived them of their peace and joy of the Holy Ghost.

St. Lidwina, who so well knew the frightful severity of expiratory suffering, was animated with that spirit of confidence, and endeavored to inspire others with the same. One time she received a visit from a pious priest. Whilst he was seated at her bedside, together with other virtuous persons, the conversation turned on the sufferings of the other life. Seeing in the hands of a woman a vase filled with grains of mustard seed, the priest took occasion to remark that he trembled when thinking of the fire of Purgatory. “Nevertheless,” he added, “I should be satisfied to go there for as many years as there are grains of seed in this vase; then, at least, I should be certain of my salvation.” “What do you say, Father?” replied the saint. “Why so little confidence in the Mercy of God. Ah! if you had a better knowledge of what Purgatory is, of what frightful torments are there endured!” “Let Purgatory be what it may,” he replied. “I persist in what I say.”

Some time after, this priest died, and the same persons who had been present during his conversation with St. Lidwina, questioning the saint as to his condition in the other world, she replied, “The deceased is well off, on account of his virtuous life; but it would be better for him if he had had more confidence in the Passion of Jesus Christ, and if he had taken a milder view of the subject of Purgatory.”

In what consisted this lack of confidence which met the disapproval of

our saint? In the opinion which this good priest had that it is almost impossible to be saved, and that we shall enter Heaven only after having undergone innumerable years of torture. This idea is erroneous, and contrary to Christian confidence. Our Saviour came to bring peace to men of good will, and to impose upon us, as a condition of our salvation, a yoke which is sweet and a burden which is not heavy. Therefore, let your *will* be good, and you will find peace, you will see all difficulties and terrors vanish. *Good will!* that is everything. Be of good will, submit to the Will of God, place His Holy Law above all else, serve the Lord with all your heart, and He will give you such powerful assistance that you will enter Paradise with an astonishing facility. I could never have believed, you will say, that it was so easy to enter Heaven! Again, I repeat, to effect in us this wonder of Mercy, God asks on our part an upright heart, a *good will*.

Good will consists, properly speaking, in submitting and conforming our will to that of God, who is the rule of all good will; and this good will attains its highest perfection when we embrace the Divine Will as the sovereign good, even then when it imposes the greatest sacrifices, the most acute suffering. Oh, admirable state! The soul thus disposed seems to lose the sensation of pain, and this because the soul is animated with the spirit of love; and, as St. Augustine says, when we love we suffer not, or, if we suffer, we love the suffering. *Aut si laboratur, labor ipse amatur.*

Venerable Claude de la Colombière, of the Society of Jesus, possessed this loving heart, this perfect will, and in his *Retrait Spirituelle* he thus expresses his sentiments: "We must not cease to expiate the past disorders of our life by penance; but it must be done without anxiety, because the worst that can befall us, when our will is good and we are submissive and obedient, is to be sent for a long time to Purgatory, and we may say with good reason that this is a great evil. I do not fear Purgatory. Of Hell I will not speak, for I should wrong the Mercy of God by having the least fear of Hell, although I have merited it more than all the demons together. Purgatory I do not fear. I wish I had not deserved it, since I could not do so without displeasing God; but, as I have merited to go there, I am delighted to go and satisfy His Justice in the most rigorous manner it is possible to imagine, and that even to the Day of Judgment. I know that the torments there endured are horrible, but I know that they honor God, and cannot prove an injury to the souls; that there we are certain never to oppose the Will of God; that we shall never resent His severity; that we shall even love the rigors of His justice, and await with

patience until it shall be entirely appeased. Therefore, I have given with my whole heart all my satisfactions to the souls in Purgatory, and even bequeath to others all the suffrages which shall be offered for me after my death, in order that God may be glorified in Paradise by souls who shall have merited to be raised to a higher degree of glory than myself.”

Behold to what an excess of Charity, the love of God and our neighbor transports us when it has once taken possession of the heart; it transforms, transfigures suffering in such a manner, that all its bitterness is changed into sweetness. *“When thou shalt arrive thus far, that tribulation shall be sweet to thee, and thou shalt relish it for the love of Christ: then think that it is well with thee, for thou hast found a Paradise upon earth.”* (Imit. 2, 12). Let us therefore have great love for God, great Charity, and we shall have little fear of Purgatory. The Holy Ghost bears testimony in the depths of our hearts that, being children of God, we have no need to dread the chastisements of a Father.

Chapter 2

Confidence—Mercy of God towards Souls—He Consoles them —St. Catherine of Genoa—The Brother of St. Magdalen de Pazzi.

IT is true that all have not attained this high degree of Charity, but there is no one that cannot have confidence in the Divine Mercy. This Mercy is infinite, it imparts peace to all souls that keep it constantly before their eyes and confide therein. Now the Mercy of God is exercised with regard to Purgatory in a threefold manner: 1) in consoling the souls; 2) in mitigating their sufferings; 3) in giving to ourselves a thousand means of avoiding those penal fires. In the first place, God consoles the souls in Purgatory; He Himself consoles them; He also consoles them through the Blessed Virgin and through the holy angels. He consoles the souls by inspiring them with a high degree of faith, hope, and Divine love—virtues which produce in them conformity to the Divine Will, resignation, and the most perfect patience. “God,” says St. Catherine of Genoa, “inspires the soul in Purgatory with so ardent a movement of devoted love, that it would be sufficient to annihilate her were she not immortal. Illumined and inflamed by that pure charity, the more she loves God, the more she detests the least stain that displeases Him, the least hindrance that prevents her union with Him. Thus, if she could find another Purgatory more terrible than the one to which she is condemned, that soul would plunge herself therein, impelled by the impetuosity of the love which exists between God and herself, in order that she might be the sooner delivered from all that separates her from her Sovereign God.”

“These souls,” says again the same saint, “are intimately united to the Will of God, and so completely transformed into it, that they are always satisfied with its holy ordinances. The souls in Purgatory have no choice of their own; they can no longer will anything other than what God wills. They receive with perfect submission all that God gives them; and neither pleasure, nor contentment, nor pain can ever again make them think of themselves.”

St. Magdalen de Pazzi, after the death of one of her brothers, having gone

to the choir to offer prayers for him, saw his soul a prey to intense suffering. Touched with compassion, she melted into tears and cried out in a piteous voice, "Brother, miserable and blessed at the same time! O soul afflicted and yet contented! these pains are intolerable and yet they are endured. Why are they not understood by those here below, who have not the courage to carry their cross? Whilst you were in this world, my dear brother, you would not listen to my advice, and now you desire ardently that I should hear you. O God, equally just and merciful, comfort this brother, who has served You from his infancy. Have regard to Your clemency, I beseech You, and make use of Your great mercy in his behalf. O God most just, if he has not always been attentive to please You, at least he has not despised those who made profession of serving You with fidelity."

The day on which she had that wonderful ecstasy, during which she visited the different prisons of Purgatory, seeing again the soul of her brother, she said to him, "Poor soul, how you suffer! and nevertheless you rejoice. You burn and you are satisfied, because you know well that these sufferings must lead you to a great and unspeakable felicity. How happy shall I be, should I never have to endure greater suffering! Remain here, my dear brother, and complete your purification in peace."

Chapter 3

Consolations of the Souls—St. Stanislaus of Cracow and the Resuscitated Peter Miles.

THIS contentment in the midst of the most intense suffering cannot be explained otherwise than by the Divine consolations which the Holy Ghost infuses into the souls in Purgatory. This Divine Spirit, by means of faith, hope, and charity, puts them in the disposition of a sick person who has to submit to very painful treatment, but the effect of which is to restore him to perfect health. This sick person suffers, but he loves his salutary suffering. The Holy Ghost, the Comforter, gives a similar contentment to the holy souls. Of this we have a striking example in Peter Miles, raised from the dead by St. Stanislaus of Cracow, who preferred to return to Purgatory rather than to live again upon earth.

The celebrated miracle of this resurrection happened in 1070. It is thus related in the *Acta Sanctorum* on May 7. St. Stanislaus was Bishop of Cracow when the Duke Boleslas II governed Poland. He did not neglect to remind this prince of his duties, who scandalously violated them before all his people.

Boleslas was irritated by the holy liberty of the Prelate, and to revenge himself he excited against him the heirs of a certain Peter Miles, who had died three years previously after having sold a piece of ground to the church of Cracow. The heirs accused the saint of having usurped the ground, without having paid the owner. Stanislaus declared that he had paid for the land, but as the witnesses who should have defended him had been either bribed or intimidated, he was denounced as a usurper of the property of another, and condemned to make restitution. Then, seeing that he had nothing to expect from human justice, he raised his heart to God, and received a sudden inspiration. He asked for a delay of three days, promising to make Peter Miles appear in person, that he might testify to the legal purchase and payment of the lot.

They were granted to him in scorn. The saint fasted, watched, and prayed God to take up the defense of his cause. The third day, after having

celebrated Holy Mass, he went out accompanied by his clergy and many of the faithful, to the place where Peter had been interred. By his orders the grave was opened; it contained nothing but bones. He touched them with his crosier, and in the name of Him who is the Resurrection and the Life, he commanded the dead man to arise.

Suddenly the bones became reunited, were covered with flesh, and, in sight of the stupefied people, the dead man was seen to take the Bishop by the hand and walk towards the tribunal. Boleslas, with his court and an immense crowd of people, were awaiting the result with the most lively expectation. "Behold Peter," said the saint to Boleslas; "he comes, prince, to give testimony before you. Interrogate him; he will answer you."

It is impossible to depict the stupefaction of the Duke, of his councillors, and of the whole con course of people. Peter affirmed that he had been paid for the ground; then turning towards his heirs, he reproached them for having accused the pious prelate against all rights of justice; then he exhorted them to do penance for so grievous a sin.

It was thus that iniquity, which believed itself already sure of success, was confounded. Now comes the circumstance which concerns our subject, and to which we wished to refer. Wishing to complete this great miracle for the glory of God, Stanislaus proposed to the deceased that, if he desired to live a few years longer, he would obtain for him this favor from God. Peter replied that he had no such desire. He was in Purgatory, but he would rather return thither immediately and endure its pains, than expose himself to damnation in this terrestrial life. He entreated the saint only to beg of God to shorten the time of his sufferings, that he might the sooner enter the abode of the blessed. After that, accompanied by the Bishop and a vast multitude, Peter returned to his grave, laid himself down, his body fell to pieces, and his bones resumed the same state in which they had first been found. We have reason to believe that the saint soon obtained the deliverance of his soul.

That which is the most remarkable in this example, and which should most attract our attention, is that a soul from Purgatory, after having experienced the most excruciating torments, prefers that state of suffering to the life of this world; and the reason which he gives for this preference is, that in this mortal life we are exposed to the danger of being lost and incurring eternal damnation.

Chapter 4

Consolations of Souls—St. Catherine de Ricci and the Soul of a Prince.

LET us relate another example of the interior consolations and mysterious contentment which the souls experience in the midst of the most excruciating sufferings: we find it in the Life of St. Catherine de Ricci, a Religious of the Order of St. Dominic, who died in the convent of Prato, February 2, 1590. This servant of God cherished so great a devotion towards the souls in Purgatory that she suffered in their place on earth that which they had to endure in the other world. Among others, she delivered from the expiatory flames the soul of a prince, and suffered the most frightful torments in his place for forty days.

This prince, whose name is not mentioned in history, in consideration, no doubt, of his family, had led a worldly life, and the saint offered many prayers, fasts, and penances that God would enlighten him as to the condition of his soul, and that he might not be condemned. God vouchsafed to hear her, and the unfortunate prince before his death gave evident proofs of a sincere conversion. He died in good sentiments and went to Purgatory. Catherine learned this by Divine revelation in prayer, and offered herself to satisfy Divine Justice for that soul. Our Lord accepted the charitable exchange, received the soul of the prince into glory, and subjected Catherine to pains entirely strange to her for the space of forty days. She was seized with a malady which, according to the judgment of the physicians, was not natural, and could neither be cured nor relieved. According to the testimony of eyewitnesses, the body of the saint was covered with blisters filled with humor and inflammation, like water boiling upon the fire. This occasioned such heat that her cell was like an oven, and seemed filled with fire; it was impossible to remain there for a few moments without going outside to breathe.

It was evident that the flesh of the patient was boiling, and her tongue resembled a piece of redhot metal. At intervals the inflammation ceased, then the flesh appeared roasted; but soon the blisters arose again and sent forth the

same heat.

Nevertheless, in the midst of this torture the saint did not lose the serenity of her countenance nor the peace of her soul; she seemed to rejoice in her torments. Her sufferings sometimes increased to such a degree that she lost her speech for ten or twelve minutes. When her sister Religious told her that she seemed to be on fire, she replied simply, "Yes," without adding anything more. When they represented to her that she carried her zeal too far, and that she ought not to ask of God such excessive suffering, "Pardon me, my dear sisters," she said to them, "if I answer you. Jesus has so much love for souls, that all we do for their salvation is infinitely agreeable to Him; that is why I gladly endure any pain, whatsoever it may be, as well for the conversion of sinners as for the deliverance of the souls detained in Purgatory."

The forty days having expired, Catherine returned to her ordinary state. The relations of the prince asked where his soul was. "Have no fear," she replied; "his soul is in the enjoyment of eternal glory." It was thus known that it was for his soul that she had suffered so much.

This example teaches us many things, but we have cited it to show that the greatest sufferings are not incompatible with interior peace. Our saint, whilst visibly enduring the pains of Purgatory, enjoyed an admirable peace and a superhuman contentment.

Chapter 5

Consolations of Souls—The Blessed Virgin—Revelations of St. Bridget—Father Jerome Carvalho—Blessed Renier of Citeaux.

THE souls in Purgatory receive also great consolation from the Blessed Virgin. Is she not the *Consolation of the Afflicted*? and what affliction can be compared to that of the poor souls? Is she not the *Mother of Mercy*? and is it not towards these holy suffering souls that she must show all the mercy of her heart? We must not, therefore, be astonished that in the *Revelations of St. Bridget* the Queen of Heaven gives herself the beautiful name of Mother of the Souls in Purgatory. “I am,” she said to that saint, “the Mother of all those who are in the place of expiation; my prayers mitigate the chastisements which are inflicted upon them for their faults.” (*Revel. S. Brig.*, lib. 4. c. 50).

On October 25, 1604, in the College of the Society of Jesus at Coimbra, Father Jerome Carvalho died in the odor of sanctity, at the age of fifty years. This admirable and humble servant of God felt a lively apprehension of the sufferings of Purgatory. Neither the cruel macerations which he inflicted upon himself several times every day, not counting those prompted each week by the remembrance of the Passion, nor the six hours which he devoted morning and evening to the meditation of holy subjects, seemed sufficient, in his estimation, to shield him from the chastisement which he imagined awaited him after death. But one day the Queen of Heaven, to whom he had a tender devotion, condescended herself to console her servant by the simple assurance that *she was a Mother of Mercy* to her dear children in Purgatory as well as to those upon earth. Seeking, later, to spread this consoling doctrine, the holy man accidentally let fall, in the ardor of his discourse, these words: “*She told me this herself.*”

It is related that a great servant of Mary, Blessed Renier of Citeaux, trembled at the thought of his sins and the terrible Justice of God after death. In his fear, addressing himself to his great Protectress, who calls herself Mother of Mercy, he was rapt in spirit, and saw the Mother of God supplicating her Son in his favor. “My Son,” she said, “deal mercifully with

him in Purgatory, because he humbly repents of his sins.” “My Mother,” replied Jesus, “I place his cause in your hands,” which meant to say, be it done to your client according to your desire. Blessed Renier understood with unutterable joy that Mary had obtained his exemption from Purgatory.

Chapter 6

Consolations of Purgatory—The Blessed Virgin Mary— Privilege of Saturday—Venerable Paula of St. Teresa—St. Peter Damian and the Deceased Marozi.

IT is especially on certain days that the Queen of Heaven exercises her mercy in Purgatory. These privileged days are, first, all Saturdays, then the different feast days of the Blessed Virgin, which thus become as festivals in Purgatory. We see in the revelations of the saints that on Saturday, the day specially consecrated to the Blessed Virgin, the sweet Mother of Mercy descends into the dungeons of Purgatory to visit and console her devoted servants. Then, according to the pious belief of the faithful, she delivers those souls who, having worn the holy scapular, enjoy this Sabbatine privilege, and afterwards gives relief and consolation to other souls who had been particularly devout to her. A witness to this was the Venerable Sister Paula of St. Teresa, a Dominican Religious of the Convent of St. Catherine in Naples. (Rossign., *Merv.*, 50; Marchese, tom. i., p. 56).

Being rapt in ecstasy one Saturday, and transported in spirit into Purgatory, she was quite surprised to find it transformed into a Paradise of delights, illuminated by a bright light, instead of the darkness which at other times prevailed. Whilst she was wondering what could be the cause of this change, she perceived the Queen of Heaven surrounded by a multitude of angels, to whom she gave orders to liberate those souls who had honored her in a special manner, and conduct them to Heaven.

If such takes place on an ordinary Saturday, we can scarcely doubt that the same occurs on feast days consecrated to the Mother of God. Among all her festivals, that of the glorious Assumption of Mary seems to be the chief day of deliverance. St. Peter Damian tells us that each year, on the day of the Assumption, the Blessed Virgin delivers several thousands of souls. (*Opusc.* 34, c. 3, p. 2).

The following account of a miraculous vision illustrates this subject: “It is a pious custom,” he says, “which exists among the people of Rome to visit the churches, carrying a candle in the hand, during the night preceding the

Feast of the Assumption of Our Lady.” Now it happened that a person of rank, being on her knees in the basilica of the AraCoeli in the Capitol, saw before her, prostrate in prayer, another lady, her godmother, who had died several months previous. Surprised, and not being able to believe her eyes, she wished to solve the mystery, and for this purpose placed herself near the door of the church. As soon as she saw the lady go out, she took her by the hand and drew her aside. “Are you not,” she said to her, “my godmother, who held me at the baptismal font?” “Yes,” replied the apparition immediately, “it is I.” “And how comes it that I find you among the living, since you have been dead more than a year?” “Until this day I have been plunged in a dreadful fire, on account of the many sins of vanity which I committed in my youth, but during this great solemnity the Queen of Heaven descended into the midst of the Purgatorial flames and delivered me, together with a large number of other souls, that we might enter Heaven on the Feast of her Assumption. She exercises this great act of clemency each year; and, on this occasion alone, the number of those whom she has delivered equals the population of Rome.”

Seeing that her goddaughter remained stupefied and seemed still to doubt the evidence of her sense, the apparition added, “In proof of the truth of my words, know that you yourself will die a year hence, on the feast of the Assumption; if you outlive that period, believe that this was an illusion.”

St. Peter Damian concluded this recital by saying that the young lady passed the year in the exercise of good works, in order to prepare herself to appear before God. The year following, on the Vigil of the Assumption, she fell sick, and died on the day of the feast itself, as had been predicted.

The feast of the Assumption is, then, the great day of Mary’s mercy towards the poor souls; she delights to introduce her children into the glory of Heaven on the anniversary of the day on which she herself first entered its blessed portals. This pious belief, adds Father Louvet, is founded on a great number of particular revelations; it is for this reason that in Rome the Church of St. Mary in Montorio, which is the center of the arch-confraternity of *suffrages for the dead*, is dedicated under the title of the Assumption.

Chapter 7

Consolations of Purgatory—The Angels—St. Bridget— Venerable Paula of St. Teresa—Brother Peter of Basto.

BESIDES the consolations which the souls receive from the Blessed Virgin, they are also assisted and consoled by the holy angels, and especially by their guardian angels. The doctors of the Church teach that the tutelary mission of the guardian angels terminates only on the entrance of their clients into Paradise. If, at the moment of death, a soul in the state of grace is not yet worthy to see the face of the Most High, the angel guardian conducts it to the place of expiation, and remains there with her to procure for her all the assistance and consolations in his power.

It is an opinion common among the holy doctors, says Father Rossignoli, that God, who will one day send forth His Angels to assemble the elect, also sends them from time to time into Purgatory, there to visit and console the suffering souls. No doubt there cannot be any relief more precious than the sight of the inhabitants of Heaven, that blessed abode whither they will one day go to enjoy its glorious and eternal felicity. *The Revelations of St. Bridget* are filled with examples of this nature, and the Lives of several saints also furnish a great number. Venerable Sister Paula of St. Teresa, of whom we have spoken above, had an extraordinary devotion towards the Church Suffering, for which she was rewarded here below with miraculous visions. One day, whilst saying a fervent prayer for this intention, she was transported in spirit into Purgatory, where she saw a great number of souls plunged in flames. Close to them she saw our Saviour, attended by His Angels, who pointed out, one after the other, several souls which He desired to take to Heaven, whither they ascended in transports of unutterable joy. At this sight the servant of God, addressing herself to her Divine Spouse, said to Him, “O Jesus, why this choice among such a vast multitude?” “I have released,” He deigned to reply, “those who during life performed great acts of charity and mercy, and who have merited that I should fulfill My promise in their regard, *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*” (*Merv.*, 50).

In the Life of the servant of God, Peter de Basto, we find an example which shows how the holy angels, even whilst they are watching over us upon earth, interest themselves in behalf of the souls in Purgatory. And since we have mentioned the name of Brother de Basto, we cannot resist the desire to make known this admirable Religious to our readers; his history is as interesting as it is edifying.

Peter de Basto, brother coadjutor of the Society of Jesus, and whom his biographer calls the Alphonsus Rodriguez of Malabar, died in the odor of sanctity at Cochin, March 1, 1645. He was born in Portugal, of the illustrious family of Machado, united by blood to all the nobility of the whole province between the Douro and the Minho. The Dukes of Pastrano and Hixar were among the number of his relatives, and the world held out to him a career of the most brilliant prospects. But God had reserved him for Himself, and had endowed him with the most marvellous spiritual gifts. Whilst still a very little child, when taken to the church, he prayed before the Blessed Sacrament with the fervor of an angel. He believed that all the people saw as he did, with the eyes of the body, the legions of celestial spirits in adoration near the altar and the tabernacle, and from that time forward the Saviour, hidden under the Eucharistic veil, became by excellence the center of all his affections and the innumerable prodigies which characterized his long and holy life.

It was there that, later, as in a divine sun, he discovered without veils the future and its most unforeseen details. It was there also that God showed him the mysterious symbols of a ladder of gold which united Heaven and earth, supported by the tabernacle, and of the lily of purity shooting forth its roots and drawing its nourishment from the flour of the wheat of the elect and the wine which alone can bring forth virgins.

Towards his seventeenth year, thanks to that purity of heart and that strength of which the Sacrament of the Eucharist was for him the inexhaustible source, Peter made at Lisbon a vow of perpetual chastity at the feet of Our Lady of Perpetual Succor. He did not yet, however, think of quitting the world, and some days later embarked for the Indies, and for two years followed the military profession.

But at the end of that time, on the point of perishing by shipwreck, being tossed about at the mercy of the waves for five entire days, supported and saved by the Queen of Heaven and her Divine Son, who appeared to him, he promised to consecrate himself entirely to their service in the religious state

for the remainder of his life. As soon as he returned to Goa, being then but nineteen years of age, he went and offered himself in the quality of lay brother to the Superiors of the Society of Jesus. Fearing that his name might procure for him some mark of distinction or esteem, he adopted henceforward that of the humble village where he had received Baptism, and was called simply Peter de Basto.

It was a short time afterwards, during one of the trials of his novitiate, that this wonderful incident occurred which is recorded in the Annals of the Society, and which is so consoling for all the children of St. Ignatius. Brother Peter's novice master sent him on a pilgrimage with two young companions in the island of Salsette, ordering them not to accept hospitality from any of the missionaries, but to beg from village to village for their daily bread and their night's lodging. One day, fatigued with their long journey, they met a humble family, consisting of an old man, a woman, and a little child, who received them with the greatest charity, and pressed them to partake of a frugal repast. But at the moment of the departure, after having returned them a thousand thanks, when Peter de Basto begged his hosts to tell him their names, wishing, no doubt, to recommend them to God, "We are," replied the mother, "the three founders of the Society of Jesus," and all three disappeared at the same instant.

The whole religious life of this holy man until his death—that is to say, almost fifty-six years—was but a tissue of wonders and extraordinary graces; but we must add that he merited them, and purchased them, so to say, at the price of virtue, labors, and the most heroic sacrifices. Charged by turns with care of the laundry, the kitchen, or the door, in the colleges of Goa, of Tuticurin, of Coulaao, and of Cochin, Peter never sought to withdraw himself from the hardest labors, nor to reserve a little leisure time at the expense of his different offices that he might enjoy the delights of prayer. Serious infirmities, the sole cause of which was excessive labor, were, he said smilingly, his most pleasant distractions. Moreover, abandoned, so to speak, to the fury of the demon, the servant of God enjoyed scarcely any repose. These spirits of darkness appeared to him under the most hideous forms. They often beat him severely, especially at that hour each night when, as was his custom, he interrupted his sleep to go and pray before the Blessed Sacrament.

One day whilst travelling, his companions fled at the sound of a troop of formidable-looking men, horses, and elephants, who appeared to approach

them with furious gestures. He alone remained calm; and when his companions expressed their astonishment that he had not manifested the least sign of fear, he replied, "If God does not permit the demons to exercise their rage against us, what have we to fear? and if He gives them the permission, why then should I endeavor to escape their blows?" He had only to invoke the Queen of Heaven, when she appeared immediately and put the infernal troop to flight.

Often it seemed as though all was confusion, even to the very depths of his soul, and he found calm, peace, and victory only near his ordinary refuge, Jesus present in the Holy Eucharist. Loaded one day with outrages, which caused him some little disturbance, he prostrated himself at the foot of the altar and asked of our Divine Saviour the gift of patience. Then Our Lord appeared to him covered with wounds, a purple mantle about His shoulders, a rope around His neck, a reed in His hands, and a crown of thorns upon His head; then addressing Himself to Peter, He said, "See what the true Son of God has suffered to teach men how to suffer."

But we have not touched the point we wished to illustrate by this holy life—I mean to say, the devotion of Peter de Basto towards the souls in Purgatory, a devotion encouraged and seconded by his good angel guardian. Notwithstanding his numerous labors, he daily recited the rosary for the dead. One day having forgotten it, he retired without having recited it, but scarcely had he fallen asleep when he was awakened by his angel. "My son," said this heavenly spirit, "the souls in Purgatory await the benefit of your daily alms." Peter arose instantly to fulfill that duty of piety. (*Menol. de la Comp. de Jésus*).

Chapter 8

Consolations of Purgatory—The Angels—Blessed Emilia of Vercelli—The Saints in Heaven.

IF the holy angels interest themselves in behalf of the souls of Purgatory in general, it is easy to understand that they have particular zeal for those of their clients. In the convent of Vercelli, where Blessed Emilia, a Dominican Religious, was Prioress, it was a point of the Rule never to drink between meals, unless with express permission of the Superior. This permission the Blessed Prioress was not accustomed to accord; she advised her sisters to make that little sacrifice cheerfully, in memory of the burning thirst which our Saviour had endured for our salvation upon the Cross; and to encourage them to do this, she suggested to them to confide those few drops of water to their guardian angels, that he might preserve them until the other life, to temper the heat of Purgatory. The following incident shows how agreeable this pious practice was to God.

A sister named Cecilia Avogadra came one day to ask permission to refresh herself with a little water, for she was parched with thirst. “My daughter,” said the Prioress, “make this little sacrifice for the love of God and in consideration of Purgatory.” “Mother, this sacrifice is not little; I am dying with thirst,” replied the good sister; nevertheless, although somewhat grieved, she obeyed the advice of her Superior. This double act of obedience and mortification was precious in the sight of God, and Sister Cecilia soon received its reward. A few weeks later she died, and after three days she appeared, resplendent in glory, to Mother Emilia. “O Mother!” she said, “how grateful I am to you! I was condemned to a long Purgatory for having had too great affection for my family, and behold, after two days, I saw my angel guardian enter my prison, holding in his hand the glass of water which you caused me to offer as a sacrifice to my Divine Spouse; he poured that water upon the flames which devoured me, they were extinguished immediately, and I am delivered. I take my flight to Heaven, where my gratitude will never forget you.”

It is thus that the angels of God console the souls in Purgatory. It may be

here asked how the saints and blessed already crowned in Heaven can assist them? It is certain, says Father Rossignoli, and such is the teaching of all masters in theology, St. Augustine and St. Thomas, that the saints are very powerful in this respect by way of supplication, or, as we say, by *impetration*, but not by *satisfaction*. In other words, the saints in Heaven may pray for the souls, and thus *obtain* from Divine Mercy a diminution of their suffering; but they cannot *satisfy* for them, nor pay their debts to Divine Justice; that is a privilege which God reserves to the Church Militant.

Chapter 9

Assistance given the Holy Souls—Suffrages—Meritorious, Impetratory, and Satisfactory Works—God's Mercy—St. Gertrude—Judas Machabeus.

IF God consoles the souls with so much goodness, His mercy shines forth still more clearly in the power which He gives to His Church to shorten the duration of their sufferings. Desiring to execute with clemency the severe sentence of His Justice, He accords abatement and mitigation of the pain; but He does so in an indirect manner through the intervention of the living. To us He gives all power to succor our afflicted brethren by way of *suffrage*, that is to say, by means of *impetration* and *satisfaction*.

The word *suffrage* in ecclesiastical language is a synonym of *prayer*; yet, when the Council of Trent declares that the souls in Purgatory are assisted by *the suffrages of the faithful*, the sense of the word is more comprehensive; it includes in general all that we can offer to God in behalf of the departed. Now, we can thus offer to God, not only our prayers, but all our good works, in so far as they are *impetratory* or *satisfactory*.

To understand these terms, let us recall to mind that each of our good works, performed in the state of grace, ordinarily possesses a triple value in the sight of God.

1. The work is *meritorious*, that is to say, it increases our merit; it gives us right to a new degree of glory in Heaven.

2. It is *impetratory* (impetrate, obtain), that is to say that, like a prayer, it has the virtue of obtaining some grace from God.

3. It is *satisfactory*, that is to say that as having, as it were, a pecuniary value, it can satisfy Divine Justice and pay our debts of temporal punishment before God.

The *merit* is inalienable, and remains the property of the person who performs the action. On the contrary, the impetratory and satisfactory value can benefit others, in virtue of the communion of saints. This understood, let us put this practical question—What are *suffrages* by which, according to the doctrine of the Church, we may aid the souls in Purgatory?

To this question we answer: They consist of prayers, alms, fasts, and penances of any kind, indulgences, and above all the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. All the works performed in the state of grace Jesus Christ allows us to offer to the Divine Majesty for the relief of our brethren in Purgatory, and God applies them to those souls according to His Justice and Mercy. By this admirable arrangement, whilst protecting the rights of His Justice, our Heavenly Father multiplies the effects of His Mercy, which is thus exercised at the same time in favor of the Church Suffering and of the Church Militant. The merciful assistance which He allows us to give to our suffering brethren is of excellent profit to ourselves. It is a work not only advantageous to the departed, but also holy and salutary for the living. *Sancta et salubris est cogitatio pro defunctis exorare.*

We read in the *Revelations of St. Gertrude* that a humble Religious of her community, having crowned an exemplary life with a very pious death, God deigned to show the saint the state of the deceased in the other life. Gertrude saw her soul adorned with ineffable beauty, and dear to Jesus, who regarded her with love. Nevertheless, on account of some slight negligence not yet atoned for, she could not enter Heaven, but was obliged to descend into the dismal abode of suffering. Scarcely had she disappeared into its depths, when the saint saw her come forth and rise towards Heaven, transported thither by the suffrages of the Church. *Ecclesiae precibus sursum ferri.* (*Legatus Div. Pietatis*, lib. 5., c. 5).

Even in the Old Law prayers and sacrifices were offered for the dead. Holy Scripture relates as praiseworthy the pious action of Judas Machabeus after his victory over Gorgias, general of King Antiochus. The soldiers had committed a fault by taking from among the spoils some objects offered to the idols, which by law they were forbidden to do. Then Judas, chief of the army of Israel, ordered prayers and sacrifices for the remission of their sin, and for the repose of their souls. Let us see how this fact is related in Scripture. (2 *Mach.* 12:39).

“After the Sabbath, Judas went with his company to take away the bodies of them that were slain, and to bury them with their kinsmen in the sepulchres of their fathers.

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

“Then they all blessed the just judgment of the Lord, who had discovered

the things that were hidden.

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

“And making a gathering, he sent twelve thousand drachms of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead, thinking well and religiously concerning the resurrection.

“(For if he had not hoped that they that were slain should rise again, it would have seemed superfluous and vain to pray for the dead. And because he considered that they who had fallen asleep with godliness had great grace laid up for them.)

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

Chapter 10

Assistance given to the Holy Souls—Holy Mass—St. Augustine and St. Monica.

IN the New Law we have the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, of which the divers sacrifices of the Mosaic Law were but feeble figures. The Son of God instituted it, not only as a worthy homage given by the creature to the Divine Majesty, but also as a *propitiation* for the living and the dead; that is to say, as an efficacious means of appeasing the Justice of God, provoked by our sins.

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was celebrated for the departed, even from the time of the foundation of the Church. “We celebrate the anniversary of the triumph of the martyrs,” writes Tertullian in the third century, “and, according to the tradition of our fathers, we offer the Holy Sacrifice for the departed on the anniversary of their death.” (*De Corona*, c. 5).

“It cannot be doubted,” writes St. Augustine, “that the prayers of the Church, the Holy Sacrifice, and alms distributed for the departed, re-lieve those holy souls, and move God to treat them with more clemency than their sins deserve. It is the universal practice of the Church, a practice which she observes as having received it from her forefathers—that is to say, the holy *Apostles*.” (Serm. 34, *De Verbis Apost.*).

St. Monica, the worthy mother of St. Augustine, when about to expire, asked but one thing of her son, that he would remember her at the altar of God; and the holy Doctor, when relating that touching circumstance in the Book of his Confessions, entreats all his readers to unite with him in recommending her to God during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. (Liv. 9., c. 5).

Wishing to return to Africa, St. Monica went with St. Augustine to Ostia, in order to embark; but she fell sick, and soon felt that her end was approaching. “It is here,” said she to her son, “that you will give burial to your mother. The one thing I ask of you is that you will be mindful of me at the altar of the Lord.” *Ut ad altare Domini memineritis mei*.

St. Augustine continues: “May I be pardoned for the tears I then shed, for

that death should not be mourned which was but the entrance to true life. Yet, considering with the eyes of faith the miseries of our fallen nature, I might shed before You, O Lord, other tears than those of the flesh, tears which flow at the thought of the peril to which every soul is exposed that has sinned in Adam.

“It is certain that my mother lived in such manner as to give glory to Your Name, by the activity of her faith and the purity of her morals; yet dare I affirm that no word contrary to Thy law has ever escaped her lips? Alas! what will become of the holiest life if Thou dost examine it in all the rigors of Thy justice? For this reason, O God of my heart, I leave aside the good works which my mother has performed to ask of Thee only the pardon of her sins. Hear me, by the wounds of Him who died for us upon the Cross, and who, now seated at Thy right hand, is our Mediator.

“I know that my mother always showed mercy, that she pardoned from her heart all offenses, and forgave all the debts owing to her. Cancel then her debts, if during the course of her long life there are any owing to Thee. Pardon her, O Lord, pardon her, and enter not into judgment against her; for Thy words are true; Thou hast promised mercy to the merciful.

“This mercy, I believe, Thou hast already shown to her, O my God; but accept the homage of my prayer. Remember that on her passage to the other life Thy servant desired for her body neither pompous funeral nor precious perfumes, she asked not a magnificent tomb, nor that she should be carried to that which she had caused to be constructed at Tagaste, her native place; but only that we should remember her at Thy altar, whose mysteries she prized.

“Thou knowest, Lord, all the days of her life she took part in those Divine Mysteries which contain the Holy Victim whose blood has effaced the sentence of our condemnation. Let her repose then in peace with my father, her husband, with the spouse to whom she was faithful during all the days of her union, and in the sorrows of her widowhood with him whose humble servant she made herself, to win him for Thee by her meekness and patience. And Thou, O my God, inspire Thy servants, who are my brethren, inspire all those who read these lines to remember at Thy altar Monica, Thy servant, and Patricius, who was her spouse; that all who still live in the false light of this world may piously remember my parents, that the last prayer of my dying mother may be heard beyond her expectations.”

This beautiful passage of St. Augustine shows us the opinion of this great Doctor on the subject of suffrages for the departed, and it makes us see

clearly that the greatest of all suffrages is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Chapter 11

Assistance rendered to the Souls—Holy Mass—Jubilee of Leo XIII—Solemn Commemoration of the Dead on the Last Sunday in September.

WE have witnessed the holy enthusiasm with which the Church celebrated the Sacerdotal Jubilee of her venerated head, Pope Leo XIII. The faithful from all parts of the world went to Rome, either in person or in heart, to offer their homage and gifts at the feet of the Vicar of Jesus Christ. The entire Church Militant rejoiced in the midst of her long trials.

The Church Triumphant in Heaven shared in this rejoicing by the canonization and beatification of a large number of her glorious members. Was it not fitting that the Church Suffering should also participate therein?

Could our dear brethren in Purgatory be forgotten? Should not those souls so dear to the heart of Jesus also experience the happy effects of that glorious feast?

Leo XIII understood this. Always guided by the Holy Spirit, when acting as Supreme Pastor, the Pope, by an Encyclical Letter dated April 1, 1888, decreed that, throughout the entire Christian world, there should be a solemn *Commemoration of the Dead* on the last Sunday of the month of September. Calling to mind with what admirable love the Church Militant has manifested her joy, and how the Church Triumphant rejoiced with her, “To crown, in a certain sense,” says our Holy Father, “this general exultation, we desire to fulfill, as perfectly as possible, the duty of our apostolic charity by extending the fullness of infinite spiritual treasures to those beloved sons of the Church who, having died the death of the just, have quitted this life of combat with the sign of faith, and have become offshoots of the mystic vine, although they are not permitted to enter into eternal peace until they shall have paid the last farthing of the debt which they owe to the avenging justice of God.

“We are moved thereto both by the pious desires of Catholics, to whom we know our resolution will be particularly dear, and by the agonizing intensity of the pains suffered by the departed souls; but we are especially

inspired by the custom of the Church, who, in the midst of the most joyful solemnities of the year, forgets not the holy and salutary commemoration of the dead that they may be loosed from their sins.

“For this reason, since it is certain from Catholic doctrine that the souls detained in Purgatory are relieved by the suffrages of the faithful, and especially by the august Sacrifice of the Altar, we think we can give no more useful nor more desirable pledge of our love than by everywhere multiplying, for the mitigation of their pains, the pure oblation of the Holy Sacrifice of our Divine Mediator.

“We therefore appoint, with all necessary dispensations and derogations, *the last Sunday of the month of September next* as a day of ample expiation; on which day there shall be celebrated by us, and likewise by our brethren the Patriarchs, Archbishops, Bishops, and by all other Prelates exercising jurisdiction in a diocese, each in his own patriarchal church, metropolitan or cathedral, a special Mass for the dead, with all possible solemnity, and according to the rite indicated by the missal for the *Commemoration of all the Faithful Departed*. We approve that the same be done in the parochial and collegiate churches, secular as well as regular, provided the Office proper for the Mass of the day everywhere where such obligation exists be not omitted.

“As regards the faithful, we earnestly exhort them, after having received the Sacrament of Penance, to devoutly nourish themselves with the bread of angels by way of suffrage for the souls in Purgatory.

“By our apostolic authority, to those of the faithful who do so we grant a plenary indulgence, to be applied to the souls departed, and the favor of the privileged altar to all those who, as we have said above, shall celebrate Mass.

“Thus the holy souls who expiate the remains of their faults by those sharp pains will receive special and efficacious relief, thanks to the Saving Host which the Universal Church, united to her visible Head, and animated with the same spirit of charity, will offer to God, that He may admit them into the abode of consolation, of light, and of eternal peace.

“Meanwhile, venerable brethren, we grant you affectionately in the Lord, as a pledge of these heavenly gifts, the apostolic benediction to you, to all the clergy, and to all the people confided to your care.

“Given at Rome, under the seal of the Fisherman, on the solemnity of Easter, in the year 1888, the eleventh of our Pontificate.”

Chapter 12

Means of Assisting the Souls in Purgatory—Holy Mass—The Religious of Citeaux delivered by the Sacred Host—Blessed Henry Suso.

NO; of all that we can do in favor of the souls in Purgatory, there is nothing more precious than the immolation of our Divine Saviour upon the altar. Besides being the express doctrine of the Church, manifested in her Councils, many miraculous facts, properly authenticated, leave no room for doubt in regard to this point. We have already spoken of the Religious who was delivered from Purgatory by the prayers of St. Bernard and his community. This Religious, whose regularity was not all that could be desired, had appeared after his death to ask the assistance of St. Bernard. The holy Abbot, with all his fervent disciples, hastened to offer prayers, fasts, and Masses for the poor departed brother. The latter was speedily delivered, and appeared, full of gratitude, to an aged Religious of the community who had specially interested himself in his behalf. Questioned as to the suffrage which had been most profitable to him, instead of replying, he took the old man by the hand, and, conducting him to the church where Mass was being celebrated, "Behold," said he, pointing to the altar, "the great redeeming power which has broken my chains; behold the price of my ransom: it is the Saving Host, which takes away the sins of the world." (L'Abbé Postel, *Le Purgatoire*, chap. 5; cf. Rossign., *Merv.*, 47).

Here is another incident, related by the historian Ferdinand of Castile, and quoted by Father Rossignoli. There was at Cologne, among the students in the higher classes of the university, two Dominican Religious of distinguished talent, one of whom was Blessed Henry Suso. The same studies, the same kind of life, and above all the same relish for sanctity, had caused them to contract an intimate friendship, and they mutually imparted the favors which they received from Heaven.

When they had finished their studies, seeing that they were about to be separated, to return each one to his own convent, they agreed and promised one another that the first of the two who should die should be assisted by the

other for a whole year by the celebration of two Masses each week—on Monday a Mass of Requiem, as was customary, and on Friday that of the Passion, in so far as the Rubrics would permit. They engaged to do this, gave each other the kiss of peace, and left Cologne.

For several years they both continued to serve God with the most edifying fervor. The brother whose name is not mentioned was the first to be called away, and Suso received the tidings with the most perfect sentiments of resignation to the Divine will. As to the contract they had made, time had caused him to forget it. He prayed much for his friend, imposing new penances upon himself, and many other good works, but he did not think of offering the Masses which he had promised.

One morning, whilst meditating in retirement in the chapel, he suddenly saw appear before him the soul of his departed friend, who, regarding him with tenderness, reproached him with having been unfaithful to his word, given and accepted, and which he had a perfect right to rely upon with confidence. Blessed Suso, surprised, excused his forgetfulness by enumerating the prayers and mortifications which he had offered, and still continued to offer, for his friend, whose salvation was as dear to him as his own. “Is it possible, my dear brother,” he added, “that so many prayers and good works which I have offered to God do not suffice for you?” “Oh! no, dear brother,” replied the suffering soul, “that is not sufficient. It is the Blood of Jesus Christ that is needed to extinguish the flames by which I am consumed; it is the August Sacrifice which will deliver me from these frightful torments, I implore you to keep your word, and refuse me not that which in justice you owe me.”

Blessed Suso hastened to respond to the appeal of the suffering soul; and, to repair his fault, he celebrated, and caused to be celebrated, more Masses than he had promised.

On the following day several priests, at the request of Suso, united with him in offering the Holy Sacrifice for the deceased, and continued this act of charity for several days.

After some time the friend of Suso again appeared to him, but now in a very different condition; his countenance was joyful, and surrounded with beautiful light. “Oh! thanks, my faithful friend,” said he; “behold, by the Blood of my Saviour I am delivered from my sufferings. I am now going to Heaven to contemplate Him whom we so often adored together under the Eucharistic veil.” Suso prostrated himself to thank the God of all mercy, and

understood more than ever the inestimable value of the August Sacrifice of the Altar. (Rossignoli, *Merv.*, 34, and Ferdinand de Castile).

Chapter 13

Relief of the Souls—Holy Mass—St. Elizabeth and Queen Constance—St. Nicholas of Tolentino and Pellegrino d’Osimo.

WE read in the Life of St. Elizabeth of Portugal that after the death of her daughter Constance she learned the pitiful state of the deceased in Purgatory and the price which God exacted for her ransom. The young princess had been married but a short time previous to the King of Castile, when she was snatched away by sudden death from the affection of her family and her subjects. Elizabeth had just received these tidings, and set out with the King, her husband, for the city of Santarem, when a hermit, coming forth from his solitude, ran after the royal cortège, crying that he wished to speak to the Queen. The guards repulsed him, but the saint, seeing that he persisted, gave orders that the servant of God should be brought to her.

As soon as he came into her presence, he related that more than once whilst he was praying in his hermitage Queen Constance had appeared to him, urgently entreating him to make known to her mother that she was languishing in the depths of Purgatory, that she was condemned to long and terrible suffering, but that she would be delivered if for the space of a year the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was celebrated for her every day. The courtiers who heard this communication ridiculed him aloud, and treated the hermit as a visionary, an impostor, or a fool.

As to Elizabeth, she turned towards the King and asked him what he thought of it. “I believe,” replied the Prince, “that it is wise to do that which has been pointed out to you in so extraordinary a manner. After all, to have Masses celebrated for our dear deceased relatives is nothing more than a paternal and Christian duty.” A holy priest, Ferdinand Mendez, was appointed to say the Masses.

At the end of the year Constance appeared to St. Elizabeth, clad in a brilliant white robe. “Today, dear mother,” said she, “I am delivered from the pains of Purgatory, and am about to enter Heaven.” Filled with consolation and joy, the saint went to the church to return thanks to God.

There she found the priest Mendez, who assured her that on the previous day he had finished the celebration of the three hundred and sixty-five Masses with which he had been charged. The Queen then understood that God had kept the promise which He had made to the pious hermit, and she testified her gratitude by distributing abundant alms to the poor.

But thou hast saved us from them that afflict us, and thou hast put them to shame that hate us. (Ps. 43). Such were the words addressed to the illustrious St. Nicholas of Tolentino by the souls that he had delivered in offering for them the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. One of the greatest virtues of that admirable servant of God, says Father Rossignoli, was his charity, his devotion to the Church Suffering. (*Merv.*, 21; *Vie de St. Nic. de Tolentino*, Sept. 10). For her he frequently fasted on bread and water, inflicted cruel disciplines upon himself, and wore about his loins a chain of sharp-pointed iron. When the sanctuary was thrown open to him, and his superiors wished to confer the priesthood upon him, he hesitated a long time before that sublime dignity, and nothing could make him decide to receive holy orders but the thought that by daily celebrating the Holy Sacrifice he could most efficaciously assist the suffering souls in Purgatory. On their part, the souls whom he relieved by so many suffrages appeared to him several times to thank him or to recommend themselves to his charity.

He lived near Pisa, entirely occupied with his spiritual exercises, when one Saturday during the night he saw in a dream a soul in pain, who besought him to celebrate Holy Mass on the following morning for her and several other souls that suffered most terribly in Purgatory. Nicholas recognized the voice, but could not distinctly call to mind the person who spoke to him. "I am," said the apparition, "your deceased friend Pellegrino d'Osimo. By the Divine Mercy I have escaped eternal chastisement by repentance; not so the temporal punishment due to my sins. I come in the name of many souls as unfortunate as myself to entreat you to offer Holy Mass for us tomorrow; from it we expect our deliverance, or at least great alleviation." The saint replied, with his usual kindness, "May Our Lord deign to relieve you by the merits of His precious Blood! But this Mass for the dead I cannot say tomorrow; I must sing the Conventual Mass in choir." "Ah! at least come with me," cried the departed soul, amid sighs and tears; "I conjure you, for the love of God, come and behold our sufferings, and you will no longer refuse; you are too good to leave us in such frightful agonies."

Then it seemed to him that he was transported into Purgatory. He saw an

immense plain, where a vast multitude of souls, of all ages and conditions, were a prey to divers tortures most horrible to behold. By gestures and by words they implored most piteously his assistance. “Behold,” said Pellegrino, “the state of those who sent me to you. Since you are agreeable in the sight of God, we have confidence that He will refuse nothing to the oblation of the Sacrifice offered by you, and that His Divine Mercy will deliver us.”

At this pitiful sight the saint could not repress his tears. He immediately betook himself to prayer, to console them in their sorrow, and the following morning went to the Prior, relating to him the vision he had had, and the request made by Pellegrino concerning the Mass for that day. The Father Prior, sharing his emotion, dispensed him for that day, and for the rest of the week, from saying the conventual Mass, that he might offer the Holy Sacrifice for the departed, and devote himself entirely to the relief of the suffering souls. Delighted with this permission, Nicholas went to the church and celebrated Holy Mass with extraordinary fervor. During the entire week he continued to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice for the same intention, besides offering day and night prayers, disciplines, and all sorts of good works.

At the end of the week Pellegrino again appeared, but no longer in a state of suffering; he was clad in a white garment and surrounded with a celestial light, in which he pointed out a large number of happy souls. They all thanked him, calling him their liberator; then rising towards Heaven, they chanted these words of the Psalmist, *Salvasti nos de affligentibus nos, et odientes nos confudisti*—“Thou hast saved us from them that afflict us, and thou hast put them to shame that hate us.” (*Ps.* 43). The enemies here spoken of are sins, and the demons who are their instigators.

Chapter 14

Relief of the Holy Souls—Holy Mass—Father Gerard—The Thirty Masses of St. Gregory.

LET us now consider the supernatural effects of a different kind, but which prove no less clearly the efficacy of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass offered for the departed. We find them in the Memoirs of Father Gerard, an English Jesuit and Confessor of the Faith during the persecutions in England in the sixteenth century. After relating how he had received the abjuration of a Protestant gentleman, married to one of his cousins, Father Gerard adds, “This conversion led to another under the most extraordinary circumstances. My new convert went to see one of his friends who was dangerously ill. This was an upright man, detained in heresy more by illusion than by any other motive. The visitor urgently exhorted him to be converted, and to think of his soul; and obtained from him the promise that he would make his Confession. He instructed him in everything, taught him how to excite himself to contrition for his sins, and went to seek for a priest. He had great difficulty in finding one, and in the meantime the sick person died. When about to expire, the poor dying man asked frequently whether his friend had not yet returned with the physician whom he had promised to bring; it was thus he called the Catholic priest.

“What followed showed that God had accepted the good will of the deceased. The nights following his death, his wife, a Protestant, saw a light moving in her room, and which came even within the curtains of her bed. Being afraid, she desired one of her servant maids to sleep in her room; but the latter saw nothing, although the light continued to be visible to the eyes of her mistress. The poor lady sent for the friend whose return her husband had awaited with so much anxiety, related to him what had happened, and asked what was to be done.

“This friend before giving an answer consulted a Catholic priest. The priest told him that the light was, for the wife of the deceased, a supernatural sign by which God invited her to return to the True Faith. The lady was deeply impressed by these words; she opened her heart to grace, and in her

turn was converted.

“Once a Catholic, she had Mass celebrated in her chamber for some time; but the light always returned. The priest considering these circumstances before God, thought that the deceased, though saved by his repentance accompanied by the desire of Confession, was in Purgatory, and stood in need of prayers. He advised the lady to have Mass said for him during thirty days, according to an ancient custom of English Catholics. The good widow followed this advice, and on the thirtieth day, instead of one light, saw three, two of which seemed to support another. The three lights hovered over her bed, then rose heavenward, never more to return. These three lights appear to have signified the three conversions, and the efficacy of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass to open Heaven to the departed souls.”

The thirty Masses which were said for thirty consecutive days is not an English custom only, as it is called by Father Gerard, it is also widely spread in Italy and other Christian countries. These Masses are called the *Thirty Masses of St. Gregory*, because the pious custom seems to trace its origin back to this great Pope. It is thus related in his *Dialogues* (Book 4, chap. 40): A Religious, named Justus, had received and kept for himself three gold pieces. This was a grievous fault against his vow of poverty. He was discovered and excommunicated. This salutary penalty made him enter into himself, and some time afterwards he died in true sentiments of repentance. Nevertheless, St. Gregory, in order to inspire the brethren with a lively horror of the sin of avarice in a Religious, did not withdraw the sentence of excommunication: Justus was buried apart from the other monks, and the three pieces of money were thrown into the grave, whilst the Religious repeated all together the words of St. Peter to Simon the Magician, *Pecunia tua tecum sit in perditionem*—“Keep thy money to perish with thee.”

Some time afterwards, the holy Abbot, judging that the scandal was sufficiently repaired, and moved with compassion for the soul of Justus, called the Procurator and said to him sorrowfully, “Ever since the moment of his death, our brother has been tortured in the flames of Purgatory; we must through charity make an effort to deliver him. Go, then, and take care that from this time forward the Holy Sacrifice be offered for thirty days; let not one morning pass without the Victim of Salvation being offered up for his release.”

The Procurator obeyed punctually. The thirty Masses were celebrated in the course of thirty days. When the thirtieth day arrived and the thirtieth

Mass was ended, the deceased appeared to a brother named Copiosus, saying, “Bless God, my dear brother, today I am delivered and admitted into the society of the saints.”

Since that time the pious custom of celebrating thirty Masses for the dead has been established.

Chapter 15

Relief of the Holy Souls—Eugenie Wybo—Lacordaire and the Polish Prince.

NOTHING is more conformable to the Christian spirit than to have the Holy Sacrifice offered up for the relief of the souls departed, and it would be a great misfortune should the zeal of the faithful cool in this respect. God seems to multiply prodigies in order to prevent us from falling into so fatal a relaxation. The following incident is attested by a worthy priest of the diocese of Bruges, who received it from its primitive source, and whose testimony bears all the certainty of an eyewitness with regard to the fact: On October 13, 1849, there died at the age of fifty-two, in the parish of Ardoye, in Flanders, a woman named Eugenie Van de Kerckove, whose husband, John Wybo, was a farmer. She was a pious and charitable woman, giving alms with a generosity proportionate to her means. She had, to the end of her life, a great devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and abstained in her honor on the Friday and Saturday of each week. Although her conduct was not free from certain domestic faults, she otherwise led a most exemplary and edifying life.

A servant named Barbara Vennecke, aged twenty-eight years, a virtuous and devoted girl, and who had assisted her mistress in her last sickness, continued to serve her master, John Wybo, the widower of Eugenie.

About three weeks after her death, the deceased appeared to her servant under circumstances which we are about to relate. It was in the middle of the night; Barbara slept soundly, when she heard herself called distinctly three times by her name. She awoke with a start, and saw before her her mistress, sitting on the side of her bed, clad in a working dress, consisting of a skirt and short jacket. At this sight, strange to say, although seized with astonishment, Barbara was not at all frightened, and preserved her presence of mind. The apparition spoke to her: "*Barbara,*" she said, simply pronouncing her name. "*What do you desire, Eugenie?*" replied the servant. "*Take,*" said the mistress, "*the little rake which I often told you to put in its place; stir the heap of sand in the little room; you know to which one I refer.*"

You will there find a sum of money; use it to have Masses said, two francs for each, for my intention, for I am still suffering.” “*I will do so, Eugenie,*” replied Barbara, and at the same moment the apparition vanished. The servant, still quite calm, fell asleep again, and reposed quietly until morning.

On awaking, Barbara believed herself the sport of a dream, but she had been so deeply impressed, so wide awake, she had seen her old mistress in a form so distinct, so full of life, she had received from her lips such precise directions, that she could not help saying, “It is not thus that we dream. I saw my mistress in person; she presented herself to my eyes and spoke to me. It is no dream, but a reality.”

She therefore went and took the rake as directed, stirred the sand, and drew out a purse containing the sum of five hundred francs.

In such strange and extraordinary circumstances the good girl thought it her duty to seek the advice of her pastor, and went to relate to him all that had happened. The venerable Abbé R., then parish priest of Ardoye, replied that the Masses asked by the departed soul must be celebrated, but, in order to dispose of the sum of money, the consent of the farmer, John Wybo, was necessary. The latter willingly consented that the money should be employed for so holy a purpose, and the Masses were celebrated, being given two francs for each Mass.

We call attention to the circumstance of the fee, because it corresponded with the pious custom of the deceased. The fee for a Mass fixed by the diocesan tariff was about a franc and a half, but the wife of Wybo, through consideration for the clergy, obliged at that time of scarcity to relieve a great number of the poor, gave two francs for each Mass she had been accustomed to have celebrated.

Two months after the first apparition, Barbara was again awakened during the night. This time her chamber was illuminated with a bright light, and her mistress, beautiful and fresh as in the days of her youth, dressed in a robe of dazzling whiteness, appeared before her, regarding her with an amiable smile. “*Barbara,*” she said in a clear and audible voice, “*I thank you; I am delivered.*” Saying these words, she disappeared, and the chamber became dark as before. The servant, amazed at what she had seen, was transported with joy. This apparition made the most lively impression upon her mind, and she preserves to this day the most consoling remembrance of it. It is from her that we have these details, through the favor of the venerable Abbé L., who was curate at Ardoye when these facts occurred.

The celebrated Father Lacordaire, in the beginning of the conferences on the immortality of the soul, which he addressed a few years before his death to the pupils of Sorèze, related to them the following incident:

The Polish prince of X., an avowed infidel and materialist, had just composed a work against the immortality of the soul. He was on the point of sending it to press, when one day walking in his park, a woman bathed in tears threw herself at his feet and in accents of profound grief said to him, "My good Prince, my husband has just died.... At this moment his soul is perhaps suffering in Purgatory.... I am in such poverty that I have not even the small sum required to have a Mass celebrated for the dead. In your kindness come to my assistance in behalf of my poor husband."

Although the gentleman was convinced that the woman was deceived by her credulity, he had not courage to refuse her. He slipped a gold piece into her hand, and the happy woman hastened to the church, and begged the priest to offer some Masses for the repose of her husband's soul. Five days later, towards evening, the prince, in the seclusion of his study, was reading over his manuscript and retouching some details, when, raising his eyes, he saw, close to him, a man dressed in the costume of the peasants of the country. "Prince," said the unknown visitor, "I come to thank you, I am the husband of that poor woman who besought you the other day to give her an alms, that she might have the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass offered for the repose of my soul. Your charity was pleasing to God: it was He who permitted me to come and thank you."

These words said, the Polish peasant disappeared like a shadow. The emotion of the prince was indescribable, and in consequence he consigned his work to the flames, and yielded himself so entirely to the conviction of truth that his conversion was complete. He persevered until death.

Chapter 16

Relief of the Holy Souls—Liturgy of the Church— Commemoration of the Dead—St. Odilo.

HOLY CHURCH possesses a special liturgy for the dead: it is composed of vespers, matins, lauds and of the Mass commonly called the Mass of Requiem. This liturgy, as touching as it is sublime, through mourning and tears unfolds to the eyes of the faithful the consoling light of eternity. This liturgy she reads at the funerals of her children, and particularly on the solemn day of the Commemoration of the Dead. Holy Mass here holds the first place; it is like the divine center round which all other prayers and ceremonies cluster. The day following All Saints' Day, the great solemnity of All Souls, all priests must offer the Holy Sacrifice for the dead; at which the faithful make it their duty to assist, and even to offer Holy Communion, prayers and alms, for the relief of their brethren in Purgatory. This feast of the departed is not of very ancient origin. From the beginning the Church has always prayed for her departed children: she sang psalms, recited prayers, offered Holy Mass for the repose of their souls. Yet we do not see that there was any particular feast on which to recommend to God all the dead in general. It was not until the tenth century that the Church, always guided by the Holy Ghost, instituted the *Commemoration of all the faithful departed*, to encourage the faithful to fulfill the great duty of prayer for the dead, prescribed by Christian charity.

The cradle of this touching solemnity was the Abbey of Cluny. St. Odilo, who was Abbot there at the close of the tenth century, edified all France by his charity towards his neighbor. Extending his compassion even to the dead, he ceased not to pray for the souls in Purgatory. It was this tender charity which inspired him to establish in his monastery, as also in its dependencies, the feast of the commemoration of all the souls departed. We believe, says the historian Bérault, that he had received a revelation to that effect, for God manifested in a miraculous manner how pleasing to Him was the devotion of His servant. It is thus related by his biographers. Whilst the holy Abbot governed his monastery in France, a pious hermit lived in a little island off

the coast of Sicily. A French pilgrim was cast upon the shore of this little island by a tempest. The hermit, whom he went to visit, asked him if he knew the Abbot Odilo. "Certainly," replied the pilgrim, "I know him, and am proud of his acquaintance; but how do you know him, and why do you ask me this question?" "I often hear," replied the hermit, "the evil spirits complain of pious persons who, by their prayers and alms deeds, deliver the souls from the pains which they endure in the other life, but they complain principally of Odilo, Abbot of Cluny, and his Religious. When, therefore, you shall have returned to your native country, I beg of you, in the name of God, to exhort the holy Abbot and his monks to redouble their good works in behalf of the poor souls."

The pilgrim betook himself to the monastery and did as he was directed. In consequence, St. Odilo gave orders that in all the monasteries of his Institute, on the day following All Saints, a commemoration of all the faithful departed should be made, by reciting the vespers for the dead on the eve, and on following morning matins; by ringing all the bells and celebrating Mass for repose of the holy souls. This decree, which was drawn up at Cluny, as well for that monastery as for all those dependent upon it, is still preserved. A practice so pious soon passed over to other churches, and in course of time became the universal observance of the whole Catholic world.

Chapter 17

Relief of the Souls—The Sacrifice of the Mass—Brother John of Alvernia at the Altar—St. Magdalen de Pazzi—St. Malachy and his Sister.

THE annals of the Seraphic Order tell us of a holy Religious named John of Alvernia. He ardently loved Our Lord Jesus Christ, and embraced in the same love the souls ransomed by His Blood and so dear to His Heart. Those who suffered in the prisons of Purgatory had a large share in his prayers, his penances, and his sacrifices. One day God was pleased to manifest to him the admirable and consoling effects of the Divine Sacrifice offered on All Souls' Day upon every altar. The Servant of God was celebrating Mass for the departed on that solemnity when he was rapt in ecstasy. He saw Purgatory opened, and souls coming forth delivered by virtue of the Sacrifice of Propitiation; they resembled innumerable sparks which escaped from a burning furnace. We shall be less astonished at the powerful effects of holy Mass if we call to mind that it is identically the same as that offered by the Son of God Himself upon the Cross. It is *the same Priest*, says the Council of Trent, *it is the same Victim, the only difference is in the manner of immolation*; on the Cross the immolation was bloody, on our altar it is unbloody.

Now, that sacrifice of the cross was of infinite value; that of the altar is, in the eyes of God, of equal value. Let us remark, however, that the efficacy of this Divine Sacrifice is only partially applied to the dead, and in a measure known only to the justice of God. The Passion of Jesus Christ and His Precious Blood shed for our salvation are an inexhaustible ocean of merit and satisfaction. It is by virtue of that Passion that we obtain all gifts and mercies from God. The mere commemoration which we make of it by way of prayer, when we offer to God the Blood of His only-begotten Son, to implore His mercy, this prayer I say, thus strengthened by the Passion of Jesus Christ, has great power with God. St. Magdalen de Pazzi learned from Our Lord to offer to the Eternal Father the Blood of His Divine Son. It was a simple commemoration of the Passion. She did it fifty times a day, and in

one of her ecstasies she saw a large number of sinners converted, and of souls delivered from Purgatory by this practice. "Each time," He added, "that a creature offers to my Father the Blood by which she has been redeemed, she offers Him a gift of infinite value." If such be the value of an offering commemorative of the Passion, what must be said of the Sacrifice of the Mass, which is the actual renewal of that same Passion?

Many Christians do not sufficiently know the greatness of the Divine Mysteries accomplished upon our altars; the feebleness of their faith, together with their lack of knowledge, prevents them from appreciating the treasure which they possess in the Divine Sacrifice, and causes them to look upon it with a sort of indifference. Alas! they will see later on, with bitter regret, how they have deceived themselves. The sister of St. Malachy, Archbishop of Armagh, in Ireland, affords us a striking example of this.

In his beautiful *Life of St. Malachy* St. Bernard highly praises that prelate for his devotion towards the souls in Purgatory. When he was as yet deacon, he loved to assist at the funerals of the poor, and at the Mass which was celebrated for them; he even accompanied their remains to the cemetery with as much zeal as he ordinarily saw those unfortunate creatures neglected after their death. But he had a sister, who, filled with the spirit of the world, thought that her brother degraded himself and his whole family by thus associating with the poor. She reproached him, showing by her language that she understood neither Christian Charity nor the excellence of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Malachy, notwithstanding, continued the exercise of his humble Charity, contenting himself with replying to his sister that she had forgotten the teaching of Jesus Christ, and that she would one day repent of her thoughtless words.

In the meantime the imprudent rashness of this woman was not to remain unpunished; she died whilst still young, and went to render an account to the Sovereign Judge of the worldly life she had led.

Malachy had reason to complain of her conduct, but when she was dead he forgot all the wrongs she had done him, and thinking only of the needs of her soul, he offered the Holy Sacrifice and prayed much for her. In the course of time, however, having many others to pray for, he neglected his poor sister. "We may believe," says Father Rossignoli, "that God permitted that she should be forgotten, in punishment for the want of compassion which she showed towards the dead."

However this may be, she appeared to her holy brother during his sleep.

Malachy saw her standing in the middle of the area before the church, sad, clad in mourning, and entreating his compassion, complaining that for the last thirty days he had neglected her. He thereupon awoke suddenly, and remembered that in reality it was thirty days since he had celebrated Mass for his sister. On the following day he began anew to offer the Holy Sacrifice for her. Then the deceased appeared to him at the door of the church, kneeling upon the threshold, and lamenting that she was not allowed to enter. He continued his suffrages. Some days later he saw her enter the church and advance as far as the middle of the aisle, without being able, notwithstanding all her efforts, to approach the altar. He saw, therefore, it was necessary to persevere, so he continued to offer the Holy Sacrifice for the repose of her soul. Finally, after a few days he saw her near the altar, clad in magnificent attire, radiant with joy, and free from suffering.

“By this we see,” adds St. Bernard, “how great is the efficacy of the Holy Sacrifice to remit sins, to combat the powers of darkness, and to open the gates of Heaven to those souls which have quitted this earth.”

Chapter 18

Relief of the Souls—Holy Mass—St. Malachy at Clairvaux— Sister Zénaïde—Venerable Joseph Anchieta and the Requiem Mass.

WE must not omit to recount the special grace which the great charity of St. Malachy towards the holy souls procured for him. One day, being in the company of several pious persons, and conversing familiarly on spiritual matters, they came to speak of their last end. “If,” said he, “the choice were given to each one of you, at what hour and in what place would you like to die?” At this question one mentioned a certain feast, another such an hour, others, again, at such a place. When it came to the saint’s turn to express his thoughts, he said that there was no place where he would more willingly end his life than in the Monastery of Clairvaux, governed by St. Bernard, in order that he might immediately enjoy the benefit of the sacrifices of those fervent Religious; and as to the time, he preferred, he said, the day of All Souls, that he might have part in all the Masses and all the prayers offered throughout the entire Catholic world for the faithful departed.

This, his pious desire, was gratified in every point. He was on his way to Rome to visit Pope Eugenius III, when, arriving at Clairvaux a little before All Saints, he was overtaken by a serious malady, which obliged him to remain in that holy retreat. He soon understood that God had heard his prayers, and cried out with the prophet, *This is my rest for ever and ever; here will I dwell, for I have chosen it.* (Ps. 131). In fact, the day following, All Saints’, whilst the whole Church was praying for the departed, he rendered his soul into the hands of his Creator.

“We have known,” says the Abbé Postel, “a holy Religious, Sister Zénaïde, who, afflicted with a frightful malady for several years, asked Our Lord the grace to die on the Feast of All Souls, towards whom she had always had great devotion. Her desire was granted. On the morning of November 2, after two years of suffering endured with truly Christian courage, she began to sing a hymn of thanksgiving, and calmly expired a few

moments before the celebration of the Masses.

We know that in the Catholic liturgy there is a special Mass for the dead; it is celebrated in black vestments, and is called *Mass of Requiem*. It may be asked whether this Mass is more profitable to the souls than any other? The Sacrifice of the Mass, notwithstanding the variety of its ceremonies, is always the same infinitely holy Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ; but as the Mass for the Dead contains special prayers for the holy souls, it also obtains special assistance for them, at least at those times when the liturgical laws permit the priest to celebrate in black. This opinion, based on the institution and practice of the Church, is confirmed by a fact which we read in the Life of Venerable Father Joseph Anchieta.

This holy Religious, justly surnamed the Wonder-worker of Brazil, had, like all the saints, great charity towards the holy souls in Purgatory. One day during the Octave of Christmas, when the Church forbids the celebration of Requiem Masses, on the 27th of December, Feast of St. John the Evangelist, this man of God, to the great astonishment of all, ascended the altar in black vestments, and offered the Holy Sacrifice for the Dead.

His superior, Father Nobrega, knowing the sanctity of Anchieta, doubted not that he had received a Divine inspiration; nevertheless, to remove from such conduct the character of irregularity which it appeared to have, he reprimanded the holy man in presence of all the brethren. "What, Father," said he to him, "do you not know that the Church forbids the celebration of Mass in black today? Have you forgotten the Rubrics?"

The good Father, quite humble and obedient, replied with respectful simplicity that God had revealed to him the death of a Father of the Society. This Father, his fellow student at the University of Coimbra, and who at that time resided in Italy, in the College of the holy House of Loreto, had died that same night. "God," he continued, "made this known to me, and gave me to understand that I should offer the Holy Sacrifice for him immediately, and do all in my power for the repose of his soul." "But," said the Superior, "do you know that the Mass celebrated as you have done will be of any benefit to him?" "Yes," modestly replied Anchieta, "immediately after the *memento for the dead*, when I said these words: *To Thee, God the Father Almighty, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, all honor and glory!* God showed me the soul of that dear friend, freed from all its sufferings and ascending to Heaven, where his crown awaited him."

Chapter 19

Relief of the Souls through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass— Venerable Mother Agnes and Sister Seraphique—Margaret of Austria—The Archduke Charles—Father Mancinelli.

WE have just spoken of the efficacy of the Holy Sacrifice in relieving the poor souls. A lively faith in this consoling mystery inflames the devotion of the true faithful, and smoothes the bitterness of their grief. Does death deprive them of a father, a mother, a friend? They turn their tearful eyes towards the altar, which affords the means of testifying their love and gratitude towards their dear departed ones. Hence the numerous Masses which they cause to be celebrated; hence also that eagerness to assist at the Holy Sacrifice of Propitiation in favor of the dead.

Venerable Mother Agnes de Langeac, a Dominican Religious of whom we have already spoken, assisted at Holy Mass with the greatest devotion, and encouraged her Religious to a like fervor. She told them that this Divine Sacrifice was the holiest act of religion, the work of God by excellence, and reminded them of Holy Scripture: “Cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully.” (*Jer.* 48:10).

A sister of the community, named Sister Seraphique, died; she had not paid sufficient attention to the salutary advice of her Superior, and was condemned to a severe Purgatory. Mother Agnes knew this by revelation. In an ecstasy she was taken in spirit into the place of expiation, and saw many souls in the midst of flames. Among them she recognized Sister Seraphique, who, in piteous accents, entreated her assistance. Touched with the most lively compassion, the charitable Superior did all in her power for the space of eight days; she fasted, communicated, and assisted at Holy Mass for the dear departed sister. Whilst in prayer, with many tears and sighs, imploring the Divine Mercy through the precious Blood of Jesus, that He would be pleased to deliver her dear daughter from those dreadful flames and admit her to the enjoyment of His presence, she heard a voice which said to her, “*Continue to pray; the hour of her deliverance has not yet come.*” Mother Agnes persevered in prayer, and two days later, whilst assisting at the Holy

Sacrifice, at the moment of the elevation, she saw the soul of Sister Seraphique ascend to Heaven in a transport of joy. This consoling sight was the reward of her charity, and inflamed anew the ardor of her devotion towards the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Christian families, which possess a spirit of lively faith, make it their duty, according to their rank and means, to have a large number of Masses celebrated for the dead. In their holy liberality, they exhaust their resources in order to multiply the suffrages of the Church, and thus give relief to the holy souls. It is related in the Life of Queen Margaret of Austria, wife of Philip III, that in one single day, which was that of her obsequies, there were celebrated in the city of Madrid nearly eleven hundred Masses for the repose of her soul. This princess had asked for one thousand Masses in her last will; the King caused twenty thousand to be added to it. When the Archduke Albert died at Brussels, the pious Isabella, his widow, had forty thousand Masses offered for the repose of his soul, and for an entire month she herself assisted with the greatest piety at ten each day. (Father Mumford, *Charité envers les Défunts*).

One of the most perfect models of devotion to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and of charity towards the souls in Purgatory, was Father Julio Mancinelli of the Society of Jesus. The Masses offered by this worthy Religious, says F. Rossignoli, appeared to have a particular efficacy for the relief of the faithful departed. The souls frequently appeared to him to beg the favor of a single Mass. (*Merv.*, 23).

Caesar Costa, the uncle of Father Mancinelli, was Archbishop of Capua. One day meeting his holy nephew very poorly clad, notwithstanding the severity of the weather, he with the greatest charity gave him an alms to procure for himself a cloak. A short time afterwards, the Archbishop died; and the Father going out to visit the sick, wrapped in his new cloak, met his deceased uncle coming towards him enveloped in flames, and begging him to lend him his mantle. The Father gave it to him; and no sooner had the Archbishop folded it about him, than the flames were extinguished. Mancinelli understood that this soul was suffering in Purgatory, and that it asked his assistance, in return for the charity exercised in his regard. Then taking back his cloak, he promised to pray for the poor suffering soul with all possible fervor, especially at the altar.

This fact became noised abroad, and produced such a salutary impression, that after the death of the Father, it was represented in a painting,

which is preserved at the College in Macerata, his native place. Father Julio Mancinelli is there seen at the altar clad in the sacred vestments, he is elevated a little above the steps of the altar, to signify the raptures with which he was favored by God. From his mouth issue sparks, the emblem of his burning prayers, and of his fervor during the Holy Sacrifice. Under the altar is seen Purgatory, and the souls receiving the benefit of the suffrages. Above, two angels pour forth from costly vases a shower of gold, which indicates the blessings, graces, and ransoms granted to the poor souls in virtue of the Holy Sacrifice. We also see the mantle spoken of, and an inscription in verse, which translated reads: *“O miraculous garment, given as a protection against the severity of the cold, and which afterwards served to temper the heat of fire. It is thus that charity gives warmth or refreshment according to the sufferings which it relieves.”*

Chapter 20

Relief of the Souls through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass—St. Teresa and Bernardino de Mendoza—Multiplicity of Masses—Pomp of the Obsequies.

LET US conclude what we have said relative to the Holy Sacrifice by what St. Teresa relates concerning Bernardino de Mendoza. She gives this fact in the *Book of Foundations*, Chapter 10.

“On the Feast of All Souls, Don Bernardino de Mendoza had given a house and beautiful garden, situated in Madrid, to St. Teresa, that she might found a monastery in honor of the Mother of God.” Two months after this, he was suddenly taken ill, and lost the power of speech, so that he could not make a Confession, though he gave many signs of contrition. “He died,” says St. Teresa, “very shortly afterwards, and far from the place where I then was. But Our Lord spoke to me, and told me he was saved, though he had run a great risk; that mercy had been shown to him because of the donation to the convent of His Blessed Mother; but that his soul would not be freed from suffering until the first Mass was said in the new house. I felt so deeply the pains this soul was enduring, that although I was very desirous of accomplishing the foundation of Toledo, I left it at once for Valladolid on St. Lawrence’s Day.

“One day, whilst I was in prayer at Medina del Campo, Our Lord told me to make all possible haste, for the soul of De Mendoza was a prey to the most intense suffering.

“I immediately ordered the masons to put up the walls of the convent without delay; but as this would take considerable time, I asked the Bishop for permission to make a temporary chapel for the use of the sisters which I had brought with me. This obtained, I had Mass offered; and at the moment I left my place to approach the Holy Table, I saw our benefactor, who, with hands joined and countenance all radiant, thanked me for having delivered him from Purgatory. Then I saw him enter Heaven. I was the more happy as I did not expect this. For although Our Lord had revealed to me that the deliverance of this soul would follow the celebration of the first Mass in the

house, I thought that it must mean the first Mass when the Blessed Sacrament should be reserved there.”

This beautiful incident shows us not only the efficacy of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, but also the tender goodness with which Jesus interests Himself in favor of the holy souls, even condescending to solicit our suffrages in their behalf.

But since the Divine Sacrifice is of such value, it may here be asked if a large number of Masses procures for the souls more relief than a smaller number, whose defect is supplied only by magnificent obsequies and abundant alms? The answer to this question may be inferred from the spirit of the Church, which is the spirit of Jesus Christ Himself, and the expression of His Will.

Now the Church advises the faithful to have prayers said for the dead, to give alms, and perform other good works, to apply indulgences to them, but especially to have Holy Mass celebrated, and to assist thereat. Whilst giving the first place to the Divine Sacrifice, she approves and makes use of various kinds of suffrages, according to the circumstances, devotion, or social condition of the deceased or his heirs.

It is a Catholic custom religiously observed from the remotest antiquity to have Mass celebrated for the dead with solemn ceremonies, and a funeral with as much pomp as their means will allow. The expense of this is an alms given to the Church, an alms which, in the eyes of God, greatly enhances the price of the Holy Sacrifice, and its satisfactory value for the deceased.

It is well, however, so to regulate the funeral expenses, that a sufficient sum be left for a certain number of Masses, and also to give alms to the poor.

That which must be avoided is, to lose sight of the Christian character of funerals, and to look upon the funeral service less as a great act of religion than a display of worldly vanity.

What must be further avoided are the profane mourning emblems which are not conformable to Christian tradition, such as the wreaths of flowers, with which, at a great expense, they load the coffins of the dead. This is an innovation justly disapproved by the Church, to which Jesus Christ has intrusted the care of religious rites and ceremonies, not excepting funeral ceremonies. Those of which she makes use at the death of her children are venerable by their antiquity, full of meaning and consolation. All that presents itself to the eyes of the faithful on such occasions, the cross and the holy water, the lights and the incense, the tears and prayers, breathe

compassion for the poor souls, faith in the Divine Mercy, and the hope of immortality.

What is there of all this in the cold wreaths of violet? They say nothing to the Christian soul; they are but profane emblems of this mortal life, that contrast strangely with the cross, and which are foreign to the rites of the Catholic Church.

Chapter 21

Relief of the Souls—Prayer—Brother Corrado d’Offida—The Golden Fishhook and the Silver Thread.

AFTER the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, we have a multitude of secondary though most efficacious means of relieving the holy souls, if we employ them with spirit, faith, and fervor.

In the first place comes prayer, prayer in all its forms. The Annals of the Seraphic Order speak with admiration of Brother Corrado d’Offida, one of the first companions of St. Francis. He was distinguished by a spirit of prayer and charity, which contributed greatly to the edification of his brethren. Among the latter there was a young monk whose relaxed and disorderly conduct disturbed the holy community; but, thanks to the prayers and charitable exhortations of Corrado, he entirely corrected himself and became a model of regularity. Soon after this happy conversion, he died, and his brethren gave him the ordinary suffrages. A few days elapsed, when Brother Corrado being in prayer before the altar, heard a voice asking the assistance of his prayers. “Who are you?” said the servant of God. “I am,” replied the voice, “the soul of the young Religious whom you reanimated to fervor.” “But did you not die a holy death? Are you still in so great need of prayers?” “I died a good death, and am saved, but on account of my former sins, which I had not the time to expiate, I suffer the most terrible chastisement, and I beseech you not to refuse me the assistance of your prayers.” Immediately the good brother prostrated himself before the tabernacle, and recited a *Pater*, followed by the *Requiem Æternam*. “Oh, my good Father,” cried the apparition, “what refreshment your prayer procures for me! Oh, how it relieves me! I entreat you to continue.” Corrado devoutly repeated the same prayers. “Beloved Father,” again repeated the soul, “still more! still more! I experience such great relief when you pray.” The charitable Religious continued his prayers with renewed fervor, and repeated the *Our Father* a hundred times. Then, in accents of unspeakable joy, the deceased soul said unto him, “I thank you, my dear Father, in the name of God. I am delivered; behold! I am about to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.”

We see by the preceding example how efficacious are the smallest prayers, the shortest supplications, to alleviate the sufferings of the poor souls. “I have read,” says Father Rossignoli, “that a holy Bishop, rapt in ecstasy, saw a child, who, with a golden fishhook and a silver thread, drew forth from the bottom of a well a woman who had been drowned therein. After his prayer, and whilst on his way to the church, he saw the same child praying at a grave in the cemetery. ‘What are you doing there, my little friend?’ he asked. ‘I am saying the *Our Father* and *Hail Mary*,’ answered the child, ‘for the soul of my mother, whose body lies buried here.’ The prelate immediately understood that God had wished to show him the efficacy of the most simple prayer; he knew that the soul of that woman had been delivered, that the fishhook was the *Pater*, and that the *Ave* was the silver thread of that mystic line.”

Chapter 22

Relief of the Holy Souls—The Holy Rosary—Father Nieremberg—Mother Frances of the Blessed Sacrament and the Rosary.

WE know that the Holy Rosary holds the first place among all the prayers which the Church recommends to the faithful. This excellent prayer, the source of so many graces for the living, is also singularly efficacious in relieving the dead. Of this we have a touching proof in the Life of Father Nieremberg, whom we have mentioned elsewhere. This charitable servant of God imposed upon himself frequent mortifications, accompanied by devotions and prayers for the relief of the poor suffering souls. He never omitted to recite the *Rosary* each day for their intention, and gained for them all the indulgences in his power; an offering which he recommended to the faithful in a special work which he published on this subject. The chaplet which he used was ornamented with pious medals and enriched with numerous indulgences. It happened one day that he lost it, and he was inconsolable; not that this holy Religious, whose heart was not fettered by anything upon earth, had any material attachment to these beads, but because he saw himself deprived of the means of procuring the relief he was accustomed to give to the poor souls.

He sought everywhere, tried to recollect where he could have put his precious treasure: all was useless, and when evening came, he found himself obliged to replace his indulgenced chaplet by ordinary prayers.

Whilst thus engaged and alone in his cell, he heard a noise in the ceiling like that of his beads, which was well known to him, and raising his eyes, he saw in reality his chaplet, held by invisible hands, descending towards him and fall at his feet. He did not doubt that the invisible hands were those of the souls who were relieved by this means. We can imagine with what renewed fervor he recited his accustomed five decades, and how much this wonder encouraged him to persevere in a practice so visibly approved by Heaven.

Venerable Mother Frances of the Blessed Sacrament had from her

infancy the greatest devotion towards the suffering souls, and persevered therein as long as she lived. (Sa Vie par le P. Joachim; Vid. Rossignoli, *Merv.*, 26). She was all heart, all devotion towards those poor and holy souls. To assist them she daily recited her Rosary, which she was accustomed to call her *almoner*, and she ended each decade with the *Requiescant in pace*. On feast days, when she had more free time, she added the Office of the Dead. To prayer she joined penances. The greater part of the year she fasted on bread and water, and on vigils she practiced other austerities. She had to endure much labor and fatigue, pain and persecution. All these works were turned into profit for the holy souls, Frances offering all to God for their relief.

Not content with assisting them herself as far as was in her power, she engaged others to do the same. If priests came to the convent, she begged for Masses for them; if they were laymen, she advised them to distribute abundant alms for the faithful departed. In recompense for her charity, God frequently permitted the souls to visit her, either to solicit her suffrages or to return her thanks. Witnesses have testified that several times they visibly waited for her at the door when she was going to the Office of Matins, that they might recommend themselves to her prayers. At other times they entered her cell in order to present their request to her; they surrounded her bed, waiting until she awoke. These apparitions, to which she was accustomed, caused her no fear, and that she might not think herself the sport of a dream or a dupe of the devil, they said on entering, "Hail, servant of God, spouse of the Lord! may Jesus Christ be ever with you!" Then they testified their veneration for a large cross and the relics of the saints which their benefactress kept in her cell. If they found her reciting the Rosary, add the same witnesses, they took her hands and kissed them lovingly, as the instrument of their deliverance.

Chapter 23

Relief of the Holy Souls—Fasts, Penances, and Mortifications, however Trifling—A Glass of Cold Water—Blessed Margaret Mary.

AFTER prayer comes fasting, that is to say, not only fasting properly so called, which consists in abstaining from food, but also all penitential works of what nature soever they may be. It must here be remarked that this is a question not only of the great austerities practiced by the saints, but of all the tribulations, all the contradictions of this life, as also of the least mortifications, the smallest sacrifices which we impose upon ourselves or accept for the love of God, and which we offer to His Divine Mercy for the relief of the holy souls.

A glass of water, which we refuse ourselves when thirsty, is a trifling thing, and if we consider this act in itself, we can scarcely see the efficacy it possesses to alleviate the sufferings of Purgatory. But such is the Divine Goodness that it deigns to accept this as a sacrifice of great value. “If I am permitted,” says the Abbé Louvet, speaking of this subject, “I will relate an example which came almost under my own personal experience. One of my relations was a Religious in a community which she edified, not by that heroism of virtue which shone forth in the saints, but by an ordinary virtue and great regularity of life. It happened that she lost a friend whom she had formerly known in the world, and from the time she heard of her death, she made it her duty to recommend her to God. One evening, being very thirsty, her first impulse was to refresh herself with a glass of water, this being allowed by her Rule; but she remembered her deceased friend, and, for the benefit of her soul, refused herself this little gratification. Instead, then, of drinking this glass of water which she held in her hand, she poured it out, praying God to show mercy to the departed. This good sister reminds us of King David, who, finding himself with his army in a place without water and oppressed with thirst, refused to drink the refreshing water which was brought to him from the cisterns of Bethlehem. Instead of raising it to his parched lips, he poured it out as a libation to the Lord, and Holy Scripture

cites this act of the holy King as one most agreeable to God. Now, this slight mortification which our holy Religious imposed upon herself by denying herself this draught of water was so pleasing to God, that He permitted the departed soul to make it manifest by an apparition. On the following night she appeared to the sister, heartily thanking her for the relief she had received. Those few drops of water, which, in the spirit of mortification she had denied herself, were changed into a refreshing bath, to temper the heat of Purgatorial fires.

We wish to remark that what we here say is not restricted to acts of supererogatory mortification; it must be understood of obligatory mortification; that is to say, of all that we have to undergo in the fulfillment of our duties, and in general to all those good works to which our duties as Christians or those of our particular state of life oblige us.

Thus every Christian is bound by virtue of the law of God to refrain from wanton words, slander, and murmuring; thus every Religious must observe silence, charity, and obedience as prescribed by the Rule. Now, these observances, though of obligation, when practiced in the true spirit of a Christian, with a view to please God, in union with the labors and sufferings of Jesus Christ, may become suffrages and serve to relieve the holy souls.

In that famous apparition where Blessed Margaret Mary saw the deceased Religious suffering intensely for her tepidity, the poor soul, after having related in detail the torments which she endured, concluded with these words: "Alas! one hour of exactitude in silence would cure my parched mouth; another passed in the practice of charity would heal my tongue; another passed without murmuring or disapprobation of the actions of the Superior would cure my tortured heart."

By this we see that the soul asked not for works of supererogation, but only the application of those to which the Religious are obliged.

Chapter 24

Relief of the Holy Souls—Holy Communion—St. Magdalen de Pazzi delivering her Brother—General Communion in the Church.

IF ordinary good works procure so much relief for the souls, what will not be the effects of the holiest work a Christian can accomplish, I mean Holy Communion? When St. Magdalen de Pazzi saw her brother in the sufferings of Purgatory, touched with compassion, she melted into tears and cried in a lamentable voice, “Oh, afflicted soul, how terrible are your pains! Why are they not understood by those who lack the courage to carry their cross here below? Whilst you were still in this world, my dear brother, you would not listen to me, and now you desire so ardently that I should hear you. Poor victim! what do you require of me?” Here she stopped and was heard to count up to the number one hundred and seven; then she said aloud that this was the number of Communions which he begged in a tone of supplication. “Yes,” she said to him, “I can easily do what you ask, but, alas! what a length of time it will take me to pay that debt! Oh, if God permitted, how willingly would I go where you are, to deliver you, or to prevent others from descending into it.”

The saint, without omitting her prayers and other suffrages, made with the greatest fervor all the Communions which her brother desired for his deliverance.

It is, says Father Rossignoli, a pious custom established in the churches of the Society of Jesus to offer each month a general Communion for the benefit of the souls in Purgatory, and God has deigned to show by a prodigy how agreeable this practice is to Him.

In the year 1615, when the Fathers in Rome celebrated this monthly Communion in the church of Our Lady in Trastevere, a crowd of persons was present. Amongst the fervent Christians there was one great sinner, who, although taking part in the pious ceremonies of religion, had for a long time led a very wicked life. This man, before entering the church, saw coming out and advancing towards him a man of humble appearance, who asked of him

an alms for the love of God. He at first refused, but the poor man, as is customary with beggars, persisted, asking for the third time in a most pitiful tone of supplication. Finally, yielding to a good inspiration, our sinner recalled the mendicant and gave him a piece of money.

Then the poor man changed his entreaties into other language. “Keep your money,” said he; “I stand in no need of your liberality; but you yourself greatly need to make a change in your life. Know that it was to give you this salutary warning that I came from Mount Gargano to the ceremony which was to take place in this church today. It is now twenty years since you have been leading this deplorable life, provoking the anger of God instead of appeasing it by a sincere Confession. Hasten to do penance if you would escape the stroke of Divine Justice ready to fall upon your head.”

The sinner was struck by these words: a secret fear took possession of him when he heard the secrets of conscience revealed, which he thought were known to God alone. His emotion increased when he saw the poor man vanish like smoke before his eyes. Opening his heart to grace, he entered the church, cast himself upon his knees and shed a torrent of tears. Then sincerely repenting, he sought a confessor, made an avowal of his crimes and asked pardon. After Confession, he related to the priest what had happened to him, begging him to make it known in order that devotion towards the holy souls might be increased; for he had no doubt that it was a soul just delivered that had obtained for him the grace of conversion.

It may here be asked who was that mysterious mendicant that appeared to this sinner in order to convert him? Some have believed that it was none other than the Archangel Michael, because he said that he came from Mount Gargano. We know that this mountain is celebrated throughout Italy for an apparition of St. Michael, in whose honor a magnificent shrine has been erected. However this may be, the conversion of this sinner by such a miracle, and at the same moment when prayers and Holy Communion were being offered for the faithful departed, shows plainly the excellence of this devotion and how pleasing it must be in the sight of God.

Let us therefore conclude in the words of St. Bernard, “*May charity lead you to communicate, for there is nothing more efficacious for the eternal repose of the dead.*”

Chapter 25

Relief of the Holy Souls—The Stations of the Cross— Venerable Mary d'Antigna.

AFTER Holy Communion we shall speak of the Stations of the Cross. This holy exercise may be considered in itself, and in the indulgences with which it is enriched. In itself, it is a solemn and very excellent manner of meditating on the Passion of our Saviour, and consequently the most salutary exercise of our holy religion.

In its literal sense, the Way of the Cross is the distance traversed by the Man-God whilst carrying the weight of His Cross from the palace of Pilate, where He was condemned to death, to the summit of Calvary, where He was crucified. After the death of her Divine Son, the Blessed Virgin, either alone or in company with the holy women, frequently visited that dolorous path. After her example, the faithful of Palestine, and in the course of ages numerous pilgrims from the most distant countries, went to visit those holy places, bedewed with the sweat and blood of Jesus Christ; and the Church, to encourage their piety, opened to them her treasures of spiritual blessings. But as everyone cannot go to the Holy Land, the Holy See allows to be erected in the churches and chapels in other countries, crosses, paintings, or bas-reliefs representing the touching scenes which took place on the real road to Calvary at Jerusalem.

In permitting the erection of these holy Stations, the Roman Pontiffs, who understood all the excellency and all the efficacy of this devotion, deigned also to enrich it with all the Indulgences which they had granted to a real visit to the Holy Land. And thus, according to the Briefs and Constitutions of the Sovereign Pontiffs Innocent XI, Innocent XII, Benedict XIII, Clement XII, and Benedict XIV, *those who make the Stations of the Cross with proper dispositions gain all the Indulgences granted to the faithful who visit in person the Holy Places of Jerusalem, and these Indulgences are applicable to the dead.*

Now it is certain that numerous Indulgences, whether plenary or partial, were granted to those who visited the Holy Places of Jerusalem, as may be

seen in the *Bullarium Terrae Sanctae*, so that as regards Indulgences we may say that of all practices of piety the Way of the Cross is the most richly endowed.

Thus this devotion, as well on account of the excellence of its object as by reason of the Indulgences, constitutes a suffrage of the greatest value for the Holy Souls.

We find an incident relating to this subject in the Life of Venerable Mary d'Antigna. (Louvet, *Le Purgatoire*, p. 332). For a long time she had the pious custom of making the Stations of the Cross each day for the relief of the souls departed; but later, for motives more apparent than solid, she did it but rarely, and finally omitted it altogether. Our Lord, who had great designs in regard to this pious virgin, and who desired to make her a victim of love for the consolation of the poor souls in Purgatory, vouchsafed to give her a lesson which serves as an instruction to us all. A Religious of the same convent, who had died a short time previously, appeared to her, complaining sorrowfully, "My dear sister," she said, "why do you no longer make the Stations of the Cross for the souls in Purgatory? You were formerly accustomed to relieve us every day by that holy exercise; why do you deprive us of that assistance?"

Whilst the soul was still speaking Our Lord Himself appeared to His servant, and reproached her with her negligence. "Know, My daughter," He added, "that the Stations of the Cross are very profitable to the souls in Purgatory, and constitute a suffrage of the greatest value. This is why I have permitted this soul, for her own sake and for the sake of others, to implore this of you. Know also that it was on account of your exactitude in practicing this devotion that you have been favored by frequent communication with the dead. It is for this reason also that those grateful souls never cease to pray for you, and to plead your cause at the tribunal of My Justice. Make known this treasure to your sisters, and tell them to draw from it abundantly for themselves and for the dead."

[See the Appendix on Indulgences for the current regulations on indulgences for the Stations of the Cross.—Editor.]

Chapter 26

Relief of the Holy Souls—Indulgences—Blessed Mary of Quito and the Heaps of Gold.

LET us pass to those indulgences applicable to the dead. Here Divine Mercy reveals itself with a sort of prodigality. We know that an indulgence is *the remission of the temporal punishment* due to sin, granted by the power of the Keys, outside of the Sacrament of Penance.

In virtue of the power of *the Keys*, which she has received from Jesus Christ, the Church may free the faithful from every obstacle to their entrance into glory. She exercises this power in the Sacrament of Penance, where she absolves them from their sins; she exercises it also outside of the Sacrament, in remitting the debt of temporal punishment which remains after the absolution; in this second instance it is the indulgence. The remission of temporal punishment by indulgences is granted to the faithful in this life only; but the Church may authorize her children whilst still living to transfer to their departed friends the remission accorded to themselves; this is *the indulgence applicable to the souls in Purgatory*. To apply an indulgence to the dead is to offer it to God in the name of His Holy Church, that He may deign to employ it for the benefit of the suffering souls. The satisfactions thus offered to the Divine Justice in the name of Jesus Christ are always accepted, and God applies it either to some soul in particular or to certain souls which He Himself wishes to benefit, or to all in general. Indulgences are either *plenary* or *partial*. A plenary indulgence is, to such as gain it, a remission of all the temporal punishment which it deserves in the sight of God. Suppose that, in order to acquit ourselves of this debt, we should be obliged to perform a hundred years of canonical penance upon earth, or suffer for a still longer time in Purgatory, by the virtue of a plenary indulgence properly gained all this punishment is remitted, and the soul no longer retains in the sight of God any shadow of sin, which prevents it from seeing His Divine face.

The *partial* indulgence consists in the remission of a certain number of days or years. These days and years in no way represent days and years of

suffering in Purgatory; it must be understood of days and years of public canonical penance, consisting principally in fasts, and such as were formerly imposed upon sinners, according to the ancient discipline of the Church. Thus, an indulgence of forty days or seven years is a remission such as was merited before God by forty days or seven years of canonical penance. What proportion exists between those days of penance and the duration of the sufferings of Purgatory? This is a secret which it has not pleased God to reveal to us.

Indulgences are, in the Church, a true spiritual treasure laid open to all the faithful; all are permitted to draw therefrom, to pay their own debts and those of others. It was under this figure that God was one day pleased to show them to Blessed Mary of Quito. One day, rapt in ecstasy, she saw in the midst of a large space an immense table covered with heaps of silver, gold, rubies, pearls, and diamonds, and at the same time she heard a voice saying, “These riches are public property; each one may approach and take as much as he pleases.” God made known to her that this was a symbol of indulgences. (Rossignoli, *Merv.*, 29). We may say with the pious author of the *Merveilles* how culpable we are if in such abundance we remain poor and destitute ourselves and neglect to assist others. Alas! the souls in Purgatory are in such extreme necessity, they supplicate us with tears in the midst of their torments; we have the means of paying their debts by indulgences, and we make no endeavor to do so.

Does access to this treasury demand painful efforts on our parts, such as fastings, journeys, and privations insupportable to nature? “Even though such were the case,” says with reason the eloquent Father Segneri, “we should submit to them.” Do we not see how men for love of gold, in order to preserve a work of art, to save a part of their fortune or a precious fabric, expose themselves to the flames of a fire? Ought we not then to do at least as much to save from expiatory flames those souls ransomed by the Blood of Jesus Christ? But Divine goodness asks nothing so painful: it requires only such works as are ordinary and easy—a Rosary, a Communion, a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, an alms or the teaching of the elements of the Catechism to abandoned children. And we neglect to acquire the most precious treasures by such easy means, and have no desire to apply them to our poor relatives languishing in the flames of Purgatory.

Chapter 27

Relief of the Holy Souls—Indulgences— Mother Frances of Pampeluna and the Bishop de Ribera—St. Magdalen de Pazzi— St. Teresa.

VENERABLE MOTHER FRANCES, of the Blessed Sacrament, of whose charity towards the holy souls we have already spoken, was also most zealous in relieving them by indulgences. One day God showed her the souls of three prelates who had previously occupied the See of Pampeluna, and who still languished in the sufferings of Purgatory. The servant of God understood that she must employ every means to effect their deliverance. As the Holy See had then granted to Spain the Bulls *of the Crusade*, which permitted the gaining of a plenary indulgence under certain conditions, she believed that the best means of assisting those poor souls would be to procure for each of them the advantage of a plenary indulgence.

She spoke to her Bishop, Christopher de Ribera, acquainting him with the fact that three of his predecessors were still in Purgatory, and urging him to procure for her three indulgences of the Crusade. She fulfilled all the conditions required, and applied a plenary indulgence to each of the three Bishops. The following night they all appeared to Mother Frances, delivered from all their sufferings. They thanked her, and begged her to thank also the Bishop Ribera for the indulgences which had opened Heaven to them. (*Vie de Françoise du Sacrem., Merv., 26*).

The following is related by Father Cepari in his Life of St. Magdalen de Pazzi. A professed Religious, who, during her last sickness, had been most tenderly cared for by St. Magdalen, died, and as it was the custom to expose the body in the church, Magdalen felt herself inspired to go and look upon it once more. She went, therefore, to the grid of the chapter room, whence she could see it; but scarcely had she done so, than she was ravished in ecstasy, and saw the soul of the departed sister take its flight to Heaven. Transported with joy, she was heard to say, “Adieu, dear sister; adieu, blessed soul! Like a pure dove, you fly to your celestial home, and leave us in this abode of

misery. Oh, how beautiful and glorious you are! Who can describe the glory with which God has crowned your virtues? What a short time you have passed in Purgatory! Your body has not yet been consigned to the tomb, and behold! your soul is already received into the sacred mansions. You now know the truth of those words I so lately addressed to you, ‘That all the sufferings of this life are nothing in comparison with the reward which God has reserved for His friends.’ ” In the same vision, Our Lord revealed to her that this soul had passed but fifteen hours in Purgatory, because she had suffered much during life, and because she had been careful to gain the indulgences granted by the Church to her children, in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ.

St. Teresa in her works speaks of a Religious who set the highest value on the smallest indulgence granted by the Church, and endeavored to gain all in her power. She led otherwise a very ordinary life, and her virtue was of a very common order. She died, and the saint, to her great surprise, saw her soul ascend to Heaven almost immediately after her death, so that she had, so to say, no Purgatory. When St. Teresa expressed her astonishment at this, Our Lord made known to her that it was due to the great care she had taken to gain all the indulgences possible during life. “It was by that means,” He added, “that she had discharged almost the whole of her debt, which was quite considerable, before her death; and had therefore appeared with great purity before the tribunal of God.”

Chapter 28

Relief of the Holy Souls—Indulgences—Indulged Prayers.

THERE are certain indulgences which are easy to be gained, and are applicable to the dead. We hope to afford pleasure to the reader by indicating the principal ones.

1) The prayer: *Oh, good and most sweet Jesus*—A plenary indulgence for those who, having confessed and communicated, recite this prayer before an image of Christ crucified, and adding some other prayer for the intention of the Sovereign Pontiff.

2) *Indulged Rosary Beads*—Great indulgences are attached to the recitation of the Holy Rosary, if we make use of beads indulged either by our Holy Father, the Pope, or by a priest who has received the faculties.

3) *The Stations of the Cross*—As we have said elsewhere, several plenary indulgences, and a great number of partial indulgences, are attached to the Stations of the Cross. These indulgences do not require Confession and Communion; it suffices to be in the state of grace, and to have a sincere sorrow for all our sins. As to the exercise itself of the Stations of the Cross, it requires but two conditions—1st, to visit the fourteen Stations, passing from one to the other, as much as circumstances will permit; 2nd, to meditate at the same time on the Passion of Jesus Christ. Persons who do not know how to make connected meditation may content themselves with thinking affectionately of some circumstance of the Passion suited to their capacity. We exhort them, without, however, imposing it as an obligation, to recite a *Pater* and *Ave* before each cross, and to make an act of contrition for their sins.

4) *The Acts of Faith, Hope, and Charity*—An indulgence of seven years and seven quarantines each time they are recited.

5) *The Litany of the Blessed Virgin*—Three hundred days each time.

6) The Sign of the Cross—Fifty days each time; with holy water, a hundred days.

7) Divers prayers, *My Jesus, mercy!*—A hundred days each time. *Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto Thine.*—Three hundred

days, one a day. *Sweet Heart of Mary, be my salvation.*—Three hundred days each time.

8) *Praised be Jesus Christ. R. For ever and ever. Amen,*—Fifty days each time that two persons salute each other with these words.

9) *The Angelus*—An indulgence of a hundred days each time it is recited, either in the morning, at noon, or in the evening, at the sound of the bell, kneeling, and with a contrite heart.

[See the Appendix on Indulgences for the current regulations on indulgences.—Editor.]

Chapter 29

Relief of the Holy Souls—Alms Raban-Maur and Edelard at the Monastery of Fulda.

IT remains for us to speak of a last and very powerful means of relieving the poor souls: viz., almsgiving. The Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas, gives the preference to alms before fasting and prayer, when there is a question of expiating past faults. “Almsgiving,” he says, “possesses more completely the virtue of satisfaction than prayer, and prayer more completely than fasting. This is why the great servants of God and the great saints have chosen it as a principal means of assisting the dead. Amongst them we may mention as one of the most remarkable the holy Abbot Raban-Maur, first Abbot of Fulda, in the tenth century, and afterwards Archbishop of Mayence.

Father Trithemius, a well-known writer of the Order of St. Benedict, caused abundant alms to be distributed for the dead. He had established a rule that whenever a Religious died, his portion of food should be distributed among the poor for thirty days, that the soul of the deceased might be relieved by the alms. It happened in the year 830 that the monastery of Fulda was attacked by a contagious disease, which carried off a large number of the Religious. Raban-Maur, full of zeal and charity for their souls, called Edelard, the Procurator of the monastery, and reminded him of the rule established regarding the alms for the departed. “Take great care,” said he, “that our constitutions be faithfully observed, and that the poor be fed for a whole month with the food destined for the brethren we have lost.”

Edelard failed both in obedience and charity. Under pretext that such liberality was extravagant, and that he must economize the resources of the monastery, but in reality because he was influenced by a secret avarice, he neglected to distribute the food, or did so in a manner far short of the command he had received. God did not leave this disobedience unpunished.

A month elapsed, when one evening, after the community had retired, he walked across the chapter room with a lamp in his hand. What was his astonishment when, at an hour that the room should be unoccupied, he found there a great number of Religious. His astonishment turned into fear when,

looking at them attentively, he recognized the Religious lately deceased. Terror seized him, an icy coldness ran through his veins and riveted him to the spot like a lifeless statue.

Then one of the dead brothers addressed him with terrible reproaches. "Unfortunate creature," said he, "why didst thou not distribute the alms which were destined to give relief to the souls of thy departed brethren? Why hast thou deprived us of that assistance amid the torments of Purgatory? Receive, from this moment, the punishment of thy avarice; another and more terrible chastisement is reserved for thee, when, after three days, thou shall appear before thy God."

At these words Edelard fell as though struck by a thunderbolt, and remained immovable until after midnight, at the hour when the community went to choir. There they found him half dead, in the same condition as was Heliodorus of old, after he had been scourged by the angels in the temple of Jerusalem. (2 *Mach.* 3).

He was carried to the infirmary, where all possible care was lavished upon him, so that he recovered consciousness. As soon as he was able to speak, in the presence of the Abbot and of all his brethren, he related with tears the terrible occurrence to which his sad condition but too evidently bore witness. Then adding that he was to die within three days, he asked for the last Sacraments, with all signs of humble repentance. He received them with sentiments of piety, and three days later expired, assisted by the prayers of his brethren.

Mass for the dead was immediately sung, and his share of food was distributed to the poor, for the benefit of his soul. Meanwhile, his punishment was not at an end. Edelard appeared to Abbot Raban, pale and disfigured. Touched with compassion, Raban inquired what he could do for him. "Ah!" replied the unfortunate soul, "notwithstanding the prayers of our holy community, I cannot obtain the grace of my deliverance until all my brethren, whom my avarice defrauded of the suffrages due to them, have been released. That which has been given to the poor for me has been of no profit but to them, and this by order of Divine Justice. I entreat you, therefore, O venerated and merciful Father, redouble your alms. I hope that by these powerful means Divine clemency will vouchsafe to deliver us all, my brethren first, and afterwards myself, who am the least deserving of mercy."

Raban-Maur increased his alms, and scarcely had another month elapsed,

when Edelard again appeared; but clad in white, surrounded with rays of light and his countenance beaming with joy. He thanked, in the most touching manner, his Abbot and all the members of the monastery for the charity exercised towards him. (*Vie de Raban-Maur*; Rossignoli, *Merv.*, 2).

What instruction does not this history contain! In the first place, the virtue of almsgiving for the dead shines forth in a most striking manner. Then we see how God chastises, even in this life, those who through avarice fear not to deprive the dead of their suffrages. I speak not here of those heirs who render themselves culpable, by neglecting to make the endowments which devolve upon them by last will and testament of their deceased relatives, a negligence which constitutes a sacrilegious injustice; but of those children or relatives who, through miserable motives of interest, have as few Masses as possible celebrated, are sparing in the distribution of alms, having no pity for the souls of their departed relatives, which they leave to languish in the horrible torments of Purgatory. It is the blackest ingratitude, a hardness of heart entirely opposed to Christian charity, and which will meet its punishment perhaps even in this world.

Chapter 30

Relief of the Holy Souls—Almsgiving—Christian Mercy—St. Francis de Sales and the Widow at Padua.

CHRISTIAN *almsgiving*, that *mercy* which Jesus Christ so much recommends in the Gospel, comprises not only corporal assistance given to the needy, but also all the good we do for our neighbor by working for his salvation, supporting his defects, and pardoning his offenses. All these works of charity may be offered to God for the dead, and contain great satisfactory virtue. St. Francis de Sales relates that at Padua, where he pursued part of his studies, there existed a detestable custom. The young men amused themselves by running through the streets at night armed with arquebuses, and crying out to all those they met, “*Who goes there?*”

People were obliged to answer, for they fired upon those who gave no reply, and many persons were thus wounded or killed. It happened one evening that a student, not having responded to the question, was struck in the head by a ball and mortally wounded. The perpetrator of this deed, seized with terror, took to flight and sought refuge in the house of a good widow whom he knew, and whose son was his fellow student. He confessed to her with tears that he had just killed someone unknown to him, and begged her to give him an asylum in her house. Touched with compassion, and not suspecting that she had before her the murderer of her son, the lady concealed the fugitive in a place of safety where the officers of justice would be unable to discover him.

Half an hour had not elapsed, when a tumultuous noise was heard at the door; a corpse was carried in and placed before the eyes of the widow. Alas! it was her son who had been killed, and whose murderer now lay concealed in her house. The poor mother broke forth into heart rending cries, and entering the hiding place of the assassin, “Miserable man,” said she, “what had my son done to you that you should thus cruelly have murdered him?”

The guilty wretch, learning that he had killed his friend, cried aloud, tearing his hair, and wringing his hands in despair. Then throwing himself upon his knees, he asked pardon of his protectress, and besought her to

deliver him up to the magistrate, that he might expiate so horrible a crime.

The disconsolate mother remembered at this moment that she was a Christian, the example of Jesus Christ praying for His executioners stimulated her to heroic action. She replied that provided he asked pardon of God and amended his life, she would let him go, and stay all legal proceedings against him.

This pardon was so agreeable to God, that He wished to give the generous mother a striking proof thereof. He permitted that the soul of her son should appear to her, resplendent with glory, saying that he was about to enjoy eternal beatitude. "God has shown mercy to me, dear mother," said the blessed soul, "because you showed mercy towards my assassin. In consideration of the pardon which you granted, I have been delivered from Purgatory, where, without the assistance which you have afforded me, I should have had to undergo long years of intense suffering."

Chapter 31

Relief of the Holy Souls—The Heroic Act of Charity towards the Holy Souls—Father Mumford—Denis the Carthusian and St. Gertrude.

THUS far we have spoken of the different kinds of good works which we may offer to God as suffrages for the dead. It remains for us to make known an act which comprises all works and means, whereby we can most effectually assist the poor souls; it is *the heroic vow*, or, as others call it, *the Heroic act of Charity towards the souls in Purgatory*.

This act consists in ceding to them all our works of satisfaction, that is to say, the *satisfactory* value of all the works of our life and of all the suffrages which shall be given to us after our death, without reserving anything wherewith to discharge our own debts. We deposit them in the hands of the Blessed Virgin, that she may distribute them, according to her good pleasure, to those souls which she desires to deliver from Purgatory.

It is an absolute donation in favor of the souls of all that we can give them; we offer to God in their behalf all the good we do, of what kind soever, either in thought, words or works, all that we suffer meritoriously during this life, without excepting anything that we may reasonably give them, and adding even those suffrages which we may receive for ourselves after death.

It must be well understood that the matter of this holy donation is the *satisfactory* value of our works (See [Chap. 9](#)), and in no way the *merit* which has a corresponding degree of glory in Heaven; for merit is strictly personal, and cannot be transferred to another.

Formula of the Heroic Act: “O Holy and Adorable Trinity, desiring to co-operate in the deliverance of the souls in Purgatory, and to testify my devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, I cede and renounce in behalf of those holy souls all the satisfactory part of my works, and all the suffrages which may be given to me after my death, consigning them entirely into the hands of the most Blessed Virgin, that she may apply them according to her good pleasure to those souls of the faithful departed whom she desires to deliver

from their sufferings. Deign, O my God, to accept and bless this offering which I make to Thee at this moment. Amen.”

The Sovereign Pontiffs, Benedict XIII, Pius VI, and Pius IX have approved this heroic act, and have enriched it with indulgences and privileges, of which the principal are the following: 1) To priests who have made this act the indult of a privileged altar every day in the year. 2) The simple faithful can gain a plenary indulgence, applicable to the souls in Purgatory only, each time they communicate, provided they visit a church or public oratory, and there pray for the intention of His Holiness. 3) They may apply to the holy souls all those indulgences which are not otherwise applicable by virtue of concession, and which have been granted up to the present time, or which shall be granted in the future. (Pius IX, Decr. 30 Sept. 1852).

“I advise all true Christians,” says Father Mumford (*Charity to the Departed*), “to cede with holy disinterestedness to the faithful departed all the fruit of their good works which are at our disposal. I do not believe that they can make a better use of them, since they render them more meritorious and more efficacious, as well for obtaining grace from God as for expiating their own sins and shortening the term of their Purgatory, or even of acquiring an entire exemption therefrom.”

These words express the precious advantages of the Heroic Act; and in order to dissipate all subsequent fear which might arise in the mind, we add three remarks: 1) This act leaves us perfect liberty to pray for those souls in whom we are most interested; the application of these prayers is subject to the disposition of the adorable will of God, which is always infinitely perfect and infinitely loving. 2) It does not oblige under pain of mortal sin, and can at any time be revoked. It may be made without using any particular formula; it suffices to have the intention, and to make it from the heart. Nevertheless it is useful to recite the formula of offering from time to time, in order to stimulate our zeal for the relief of the holy souls by prayer, penance, and good works. 3) The Heroic Act does not subject us to the direful consequences of having to undergo a long Purgatory ourselves; on the contrary, it allows us to rely with more assured confidence on the mercy of God in our regard, as is shown by the example of St. Gertrude.

Venerable Denis, the Carthusian, relates that the Virgin, St. Gertrude, had made a complete donation of all her works of satisfaction in favor of the faithful departed, without reserving anything wherewith to discharge the

debts which she herself might have contracted in the sight of God. Being at the point of death, and, like all the saints, considering with much sorrow the great number of her sins on the one hand, and, on the other, remembering that she had employed all her works of satisfaction for the expiation of the sins of others, she was afflicted, lest, having given all to others and reserved nothing for herself, her soul, on its departure from this world, should be condemned to horrible suffering. In the midst of her fears Our Lord appeared to her and consoled her, saying: “Be reassured, My daughter, your charity towards the departed will be no detriment to you. Know that the generous donation you have made of all your works to the holy souls has been singularly pleasing to Me; and to give you a proof thereof, I declare to you that all the pains you would have had to endure in the other life are now remitted; moreover, in recompense for your generous charity, I will so enhance the value of the merits of your works as to give you a great increase of glory in Heaven.”

Chapter 32

Relief of the Holy Souls—Which of them should be the Objects of our Charity—All the Faithful Departed—St. Andrew Avellino—Sinners dying without the Sacraments—St. Francis de Sales.

WE have seen the resources and the numerous means which Divine Mercy has placed in our hands for relieving the souls in Purgatory; but what souls are in those expiatory flames, and to what souls should we give our assistance? For what souls should we pray and offer our suffrages to God? To these questions we must answer that we should pray for the souls of all the faithful departed, *omnium fidelium defunctorum*, according to the expression of the Church. Although filial piety imposes special duties upon us with regard to parents and relations, Christian charity commands us to pray for all the faithful departed in general, because they are all our brethren in Jesus Christ, all are our neighbors, whom we must love as ourselves.

By these words, *faithful departed*, the Church means all those actually in Purgatory, that is to say, those who are neither in Hell, nor as yet worthy to be admitted into the glory of Paradise. But who are these souls? Can we know them? God has reserved this knowledge to Himself, and, except so far as He is pleased to show us, we should remain in total ignorance of the state of souls in the other life. Now, He rarely makes known that a soul is in Purgatory or in the glory of Heaven; still more rarely does He reveal the reprobation of a soul. In this uncertainty we must pray in general, as does the Church, *for all the departed*, without prejudice to those souls whom we wish to aid in particular.

We may evidently restrict our intention to those among the dead who are still in need of our assistance, if God grants us the privilege which He accorded to St. Andrew Avellino, of knowing the condition of souls in the other life. When this holy Religious of the Order of Theatines was, according to his pious custom, praying with angelic fervor for the departed, it sometimes happened that he experienced within himself a sort of resistance,

a feeling of invincible repulsion; at other times it was, on the contrary, a great consolation and a particular attraction. He soon understood the meaning of these different impressions; the first signified that his prayer was useless, that the soul which he desired to assist was unworthy of mercy, and condemned to eternal fire; the other indicated that his prayer was efficacious for the relief of the soul in Purgatory. It was the same when he wished to offer the Holy Sacrifice for someone deceased. He felt, on leaving the sacristy, as though withheld by an irresistible hand, and understood that that soul was in Hell; but when he was inundated with joy, light, and devotion, he was sure of contributing to the deliverance of a soul.

This charitable saint prayed, therefore, with the greatest fervor for the dead whom he knew to be suffering, and ceased not to apply his suffrages until the souls came to thank him, giving him the assurance of their deliverance. (Life of the Saint).

As for us, who have not these supernatural lights, we must pray for all the departed, even for the greatest sinners and the most virtuous Christian. St. Augustine knew the great virtue of his mother, St. Monica; nevertheless, not content with offering his own suffrages for her to God, he asked his readers not to cease recommending her soul to Divine Mercy.

As regards great sinners, who die without being outwardly reconciled with God, we may not exclude them from our suffrages, because we have not the certainty of their interior impenitence. Faith teaches us that all men dying in the state of mortal sin incur eternal damnation; but who are those that in reality die in that state? God alone, who reserves to Himself the judgment of the living and the dead, knows this. As to ourselves, we can but draw a conjectural conclusion from exterior circumstances, and from [even] this we must refrain. It must, however, be confessed that there is everything to be feared for those who die *unprepared for death*, and all hope seems to vanish *for those who refuse to receive the Sacraments*. The latter quit this life with exterior signs of reprobation. Nevertheless, we must leave the judgment to God, according to the words, *Dei judicium est*—"To God belongs judgment." (*Deut.* 1:17). There is more to be hoped for those who are not positively hostile to religion, who are benevolent towards the poor, who retain some practice of Christian piety, or who at least approve and favor piety; there is more, I say, to hope for such persons when it happens that they die suddenly, without having had the time to receive the last Sacraments of the Church.

St. Francis de Sales will not have us despair of the conversion of sinners until their last breath, and even after their death he forbids us to judge evil of those who have led a bad life. With the exception of those sinners whose reprobation is made manifest by Holy Scripture, we may not, he says, conclude that a person is damned, but must respect the secret of God. His principal reason was, that as the first grace is gratuitous, so also is the last, which is final perseverance or a good death. This is why we must hope for the departed, how sad soever his death may have been, because our conjectures can be based on the exterior only, whereby the most clever may be deceived.

Chapter 33

Relief of the Holy Souls—For whom are we to Pray?—Great Sinners—Father Ravignan and General Exelmans—The Widow in Mourning and the Venerable Curé d’Ars—Sister Catherine of St. Augustine and the Sinner Dead in a Grotto.

FATHER RAVIGNAN, an illustrious and holy preacher of the Society of Jesus, also cherished great hope for the welfare of sinners carried away by a sudden death, *when otherwise they had borne no hatred in the heart for the things of God*. He lived to speak of the supreme moment, and it seems to have been his opinion that many sinners are converted in their last moments, and are reconciled to God without being able to give any exterior sign thereof. In certain deaths there are mysteries of Mercy where the eye of man sees nothing but strokes of Justice. As a last glimmer of light, God sometimes reveals Himself to those souls whose greatest misfortune has been to ignore Him; and the last sigh, understood by Him who penetrates hearts, may be a groan that calls for pardon; that is to say, an act of perfect contrition. General Exelmans, a relative of this good father, was suddenly carried to the tomb by an accident, and unfortunately he had not been faithful in the practice of his religion. He had promised that he would one day make his Confession, but had not had the opportunity to do so. Father Ravignan, who, for a long time had prayed and procured prayers for him, was filled with consternation when he heard of such a death. The same day, a person accustomed to receive supernatural communications thought he heard an interior voice, which said to him, “Who then knows the extent of God’s mercy? Who knows the depth of the ocean, or how much water is contained therein? Much will be forgiven to those who have sinned through ignorance.”

The biographer from whom we borrow this incident, Father de Ponlevoy, goes on to say, “Christians, placed under the law of Hope no less than under the law of Faith and Charity, we must continually lift ourselves up from the depths of our sufferings to the thought of the infinite goodness of God. No limit to the grace of God is placed here below; while there remains a spark of

life there is nothing which it cannot effect in the soul. Therefore we must ever hope and petition God with humble persistency. We know not to what a degree we may be heard. Great saints and doctors have gone to great lengths in extolling the powerful efficacy of prayer for the dear departed, how unhappy soever their end may have been. We shall one day know the unspeakable marvels of Divine Mercy. We should never cease to implore it with the greatest confidence.”

The following is an incident which our readers may have seen in the *Petit Messenger du Coeur de Marie*, November 1880. A Religious, preaching a mission to the ladies at Nancy, had reminded them in a conference that we must never despair of the salvation of a soul, and that sometimes actions of the least importance in the eyes of man are rewarded by God at the hour of death. When he was about to leave the church, a lady dressed in mourning approached him and said, “Father, you just recommended to us confidence and hope; what has just happened to me fully justifies your words. I had a husband who was most kind and affectionate, and who, although otherwise leading an irreproachable life, entirely neglected the practice of his religion. My prayers and exhortations remained without effect. During the month of May which preceded his death, I had erected in my room, as I was accustomed to do, a little altar of the Blessed Virgin, and decorated it with flowers, which I renewed from time to time. My husband passed the Sunday in the country, and each time he returned he brought me some flowers, which he himself had plucked, and with these I used to adorn my oratory. Did he notice this? Did he do this to give me pleasure, or was it through a sentiment of piety towards the Blessed Virgin? I know not, but he never failed to bring me the flowers.

“In the beginning of the following month he died suddenly, without having had time to receive the consolations of religion. I was inconsolable, especially as I saw all my hopes of his return to God vanish. In consequence of my grief, my health became completely shattered, and my family urged me to make a tour in the south. As I had to pass through Lyons, I desired to see the Curé d’Ars. I therefore wrote to him asking an audience, and recommending to his prayers my husband, who had died suddenly. I gave him no further details.

“Arrived at Ars, scarcely had I entered the venerable Curé’s room than, to my great astonishment, he addressed me in these words: ‘Madame, you are disconsolate; but have you forgotten those bouquets of flowers which

were brought to you each Sunday of the month of May?’ It is impossible to express my astonishment on hearing M. Vianney remind me of a circumstance that I had not mentioned to anyone, and which he could know only by revelation. He continued, ‘God has had mercy on him who honored His Holy Mother. At the moment of his death your husband repented; his soul is in Purgatory; our prayers and good works will obtain his deliverance.’”

We read in the Life of a holy Religious, Sister Catherine of St. Augustine (St. Alphonsus, Paraph. of the *Salve Regina*), that in the place where she lived there was a woman named Mary, who in her youth had given herself up to a very disorderly life, and as age brought no amendment, but, on the contrary, she grew more obstinate in vice, the inhabitants, no longer willing to tolerate the scandal she gave, drove her from the city. She found no other asylum than a grotto in the forest, where, after a few months, she died without the assistance of the Sacraments. Her body was interred in a field, as though it were something contagious.

Sister Catherine, who was accustomed to recommend to God the souls of all those of whose death she heard, thought not of praying for this one, judging, as did everyone else, that she was surely damned.

Four months later the servant of God heard a voice saying, “Sister Catherine, how unfortunate I am! You recommend to God the souls of all; I am the only one upon whom you take no pity!” “Who then are you?” replied the sister. “I am poor Mary, who died in the grotto.” “What! Mary, are you saved?” “Yes, by the Divine Mercy I am. At the point of death, terrified by the remembrance of my crimes, and seeing myself abandoned by all, I called upon the Blessed Virgin. In her tender goodness she heard me, and obtained for me the grace of perfect contrition, with a desire of confessing, had it been in my power to do so. I thus recovered the grace of God and escaped Hell. But I was obliged to go to Purgatory, where I suffer terribly.

My time will be shortened, and I shall soon be liberated, if a few Masses are offered for me. Oh! have them celebrated for me, dear sister, and I shall ever remember you before Jesus and Mary.”

Sister Catherine hastened to fulfill this request, and after a few days the soul again appeared, brilliant as a star, and returning thanks for her charity.

Chapter 34

Motives for Assisting the Holy Souls—Excellence of this Work —St. Francis de Sales—St. Thomas of Aquin—St. Bridget.

WE have just passed in review the means and resources which Divine Mercy has placed in our hands for the relief of our brethren in Purgatory. These means are powerful, the resources rich; but do we make an abundant use thereof? Having it in our power to assist the poor souls, have we zeal enough to do so? Are we as rich in Charity as God is rich in mercy? Alas! how many Christians do little or nothing for the departed! And those who forget them not, those who have sufficient Charity to aid them by their suffrages, how often are they not lacking in zeal and fervor! Compare the care we bestow upon the sick with the assistance which we give to the suffering souls. When a father or mother is afflicted with some malady, when a child or any person dear to us is a prey to suffering, what care, what solicitude, what devotion on our part! But the holy souls, who are no less dear to us, languish under the weight, not of a painful malady, but of expiatory torments a thousand times more cruel. Are we equally fervent, solicitous, eager to procure them relief? “No,” says St. Francis de Sales, “we do not sufficiently remember our dear departed friends. Their memory seems to perish with the sound of the funeral bells, and we forget that the friendship which finds an end, even in death, was never genuine friendship.”

From whence this sad and culpable forgetfulness? Its principal cause is want of reflection. *Quia nullus est qui recogitat corde*—“Because there is none that considereth in the heart.” (*Jer.* 12:2). We lose sight of the great motives which urge us to the exercise of this Charity towards the dead. It is, therefore, to stimulate our zeal that we are about to recall to mind these motives, and to place them in the strongest possible light.

We may say that all these motives are summed up in these words of the Holy Ghost: *It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins*, that is, from the temporal punishment due to their sins. (*2 Mach.* 12:46). In the first place, it is a work, *holy* and excellent in itself, as also agreeable and meritorious in the sight of God.

Accordingly, it is a *salutary* work, supremely profitable for our own salvation, for our welfare in this world and the next.

“One of the holiest works, one of the best exercises of piety that we can practice in this world,” says St. Augustine, “is to offer sacrifices, alms, and prayers for the dead.” (*Homil.* 16). “The relief which we procure for the departed,” says St. Jerome, “obtains for us a like mercy.”

Considered in itself, prayer for the dead is a work of Faith, Charity, and frequently even of Justice.

First, who are, indeed, the persons whom there is question of assisting? Who are those holy, predestined souls, so dear to God and Our Lord Jesus Christ, so dear to their Mother, the Church, who unceasingly recommends them to our charity; souls who are dear also to ourselves, that were, perhaps, intimately united to us upon earth, and who supplicate us in these touching words: *Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you my friends.* (*Job* 19:21). Second, in what necessities do they find themselves? Alas! their necessities being very great, the souls who thus suffer have a right to our assistance proportionate to their utter helplessness to do anything for themselves. Third, what good do we procure for the souls? The greatest good, since we put them in possession of eternal beatitude.

“To assist the souls in Purgatory,” says St. Francis de Sales, “is to perform the most excellent of the works of Mercy, or rather it is to practice in a most sublime manner all the works of Mercy together: it is to visit the sick; it is to give drink to those who thirst for the vision of God; it is to feed the hungry, to ransom prisoners, to clothe the naked, to procure for poor exiles the hospitality of the Heavenly Jerusalem; it is to comfort the afflicted, to instruct the ignorant—in fine, to practice all works of Mercy in one.” This doctrine agrees very well with that of St. Thomas, who says in his *Summa*, “Suffrages for the dead are more agreeable to God than suffrages for the living; because the former stand in more urgent need thereof, not being able to assist themselves, as are the living.” (Supplem., Q. 71, art. 5).

Our Lord regards every work of Mercy exercised towards our neighbor as done to Himself. “*It is to Me,*” says He, “*that you have done it,*”—*Mihi fecistis*. This is most especially true of Mercy practiced towards the poor souls. It was revealed to St. Bridget that he who delivers a soul from Purgatory has the same merit as if he delivered Jesus Christ Himself from captivity.

Chapter 35

Motives for Aiding the Holy Souls—Excellence of the Work—Controversy between Brother Benedict and Brother Bertrand.

WHEN we so highly extol the merits of prayer for the dead, we do not in any way infer that other good works must be omitted; for all other works must be exercised according to time, place, and circumstances. The only intention we had in view was to give a correct idea of Mercy towards the dead, and to inspire others with a desire to practice it.

Moreover, the spiritual works of Mercy, which have for object the salvation of souls, are all of equal excellency, and it is only in certain respects that we may place the assistance of the dead above zeal for the conversion of sinners.

It is related in the Chronicles of the Friars Preachers (Cf. Rossign., *Merv.* I), that a spirited controversy arose between two Religious of that Order, Brother Benedict and Brother Bertrand, on the subject of suffrages for the departed. It was occasioned by the following: Brother Bertrand often celebrated Holy Mass for sinners, and prayed continually for their conversion, imposing upon himself the most severe penances; but he was rarely seen to say Mass in black for the dead. Brother Benedict, who had great devotion towards the souls in Purgatory, having remarked this conduct, asked him why he thus acted.

“Because,” replied he, “the souls in Purgatory are sure of their salvation, while sinners are continually exposed to the danger of falling into Hell. What more deplorable condition than that of a soul in the state of mortal sin? She is in enmity with God, and bound in the chains of the devil, suspended over the abyss of Hell by the frail thread of life, that may be broken at any moment. The sinner walks in the way of perdition; if he continues to advance, he will fall into the eternal abyss. We must, therefore, come to his assistance, and preserve him from this, the greatest of misfortunes, by laboring for his conversion. Moreover, was it not to save sinners that the Son of God came upon earth and died upon a cross? St. Denis also assures us that *the most divine of all divine things is to work with God for the salvation of*

souls. As regards the souls in Purgatory, they are safe, their eternal salvation is secure. They suffer, they are a prey to great torments, but they have nothing to fear from Hell, and their sufferings will have an end. The debts they have contracted diminish each day, and they will soon enjoy eternal light; whilst sinners are continually menaced with damnation, the most terrible misfortune that can befall one of God's creatures."

"All that you have said is true," replied Brother Benedict, "but there is another consideration to be made. Sinners are slaves of Satan, of their own free will. Their yoke is of their own choosing, they could break their chains if they pleased; whereas the poor souls in Purgatory can but sigh and implore the assistance of the living. It is impossible for them to break the fetters which hold them captive in those penal flames. Suppose you met two beggars, the one sick, maimed, and helpless, absolutely incapable of earning his livelihood; the other, on the contrary, although in great distress, young and vigorous; which of the two would deserve the greater share of your alms?"

"Assuredly the one who was unable to work," answered Brother Bertrand.

"Well, my dear Father," continued Benedict, "this is just the case with regard to sinners and the holy souls. They can no longer help themselves. The time of prayer, Confession, and good works is past for them; we alone are able to relieve them. It is true they have deserved these sufferings in punishment for their sins, but they now bewail and detest those sins. They are in the grace and friendship of God; whereas sinners are His enemies. Certainly we must pray for their conversion, but without prejudice to that which we owe to the suffering souls, so dear to the heart of Jesus. Let us compassionate sinners, but let us not forget that they have all the means of salvation at their disposal; they must break the bonds of sin and fly the danger of damnation which threatens them. Does it not appear evident that the suffering souls are in greater need and merit a larger share in our charity?"

Notwithstanding the force of these arguments, Brother Bertrand persisted in his first opinion. But the night following he had an apparition of a soul from Purgatory, which made him experience for a short time the pain which she herself endured. This suffering was so atrocious that it seemed impossible to bear it. Then, as Isaias says, torture gave him understanding: *Vexatio intellectum dabit* (Is. 28:19), and he was convinced that he ought to

do more for the suffering souls. The next morning, filled with compassion, he ascended the altar steps vested in black, and offered the Holy Sacrifice for the dead.

Chapter 36

Motives for Assisting the Holy Souls—Intimate Ties which Unite us to them—Filial Piety—Cimon of Athens and his Father in Prison—St. John of God saving the Sick from the Conflagration.

IF we are obliged to assist the holy souls because of the extreme necessity in which they are, how much greater does this motive become when we remember that these souls are united to us by the most sacred ties, the ties of blood, by the Blood of Jesus Christ, and by the ties of human flesh and blood, whence we have been brought forth according to the flesh?

Yes, there are in Purgatory souls united to us by the closest family ties. It may be a father or a mother, who, languishing in those horrible torments, extend their arms in supplication towards me. What would we not do for our father or for our mother, if we knew they were pining away in some loathsome dungeon? An ancient Athenian, the celebrated Cimon, had the grief to see his father imprisoned by heartless creditors whom he was unable to satisfy. What was worse, he could not raise a sum sufficient to effect his father's ransom, and the old man died in prison. Cimon hastened to the prison and requested that they would at least grant him the body of his father that he might give it burial. This was refused him, under pretext that, not having had wherewith to pay his debts, he could not be set at liberty. "Allow me first to bury my father," cried Cimon, "I will then return and take his place in prison."

We admire this act of filial piety, but are we not also bound to imitate it? Have we not also, perhaps, a father or a mother in Purgatory? Are we not obliged to deliver them at the cost of the greatest sacrifices? More fortunate than Cimon, we have wherewith to pay their debts; we need not take their place; on the contrary, to deliver them is to purchase our own ransom.

We admire, also, the charity of St. John of God, who braved the fury of the flames to save the poor sick during a conflagration. This great servant of God died at Granada in the year 1550, kneeling before an image of Jesus crucified, which he embraced and continued to hold clasped tightly within

his arms, even after he had breathed forth his soul to God. Born of very poor parents, and obliged to support himself by tending flocks, he was rich in faith and confidence in God. He took great delight in prayer and hearing the Word of God; this was the foundation of the great sanctity which he afterwards attained. A sermon by the Venerable Father John d'Avila, the Apostle of Andalusia, made such an impression upon him, that he resolved to consecrate his entire life to the service of the sick poor. Without other resource than his charity and confidence in God, he succeeded in purchasing a house, in which he assembled all poor abandoned sick, that he might give them nourishment for soul and body. This asylum soon developed into the Royal Hospital of Granada, an immense establishment, filled with a multitude of the aged and infirm. One day a fire having broken out in the hospital, many of the sick were in danger of perishing by a most horrible death. They were surrounded on all sides by flames, so that it was impossible for anyone to attempt their rescue. They uttered the most heartrending cries, calling Heaven and earth to their assistance. John sees them, his charity is inflamed, he rushes into the fire, battles through flame and smoke until he reaches the beds of the sick; then raising them upon his shoulders, he carries these unfortunate creatures one after another to a place of safety. Obligated to traverse this vast furnace, working in the heat of the fire for a whole half-hour, the saint had not sustained the least injury; the flames respected his person, his clothing, and even the least hair of his head, God wishing to show by a miracle how pleasing to Him was the charity of His servant. And those who save, not the body, but souls from the flames of Purgatory, is their work less agreeable to God? Are the necessities, the cries and moans of those souls less touching to a heart of faith? Is it more difficult to aid them? Is it necessary to cast ourselves into the flames in order to rescue them?

Assuredly, we have every facility in our power for affording them relief, and God does not demand great efforts on our part. Yet the charity of fervent souls inspires them to make the most heroic sacrifices, and even to share the torments of their brethren in Purgatory.

Chapter 37

Motives for Assisting the Holy Souls—Facility in Relieving them—The Example of the Saints and of all Fervent Christians—The Servant of God, Mary Villani—The Burned Forehead.

WE have already seen how St. Catherine de Ricci and several others carried their heroism so far as to suffer instead of the souls in Purgatory. Let us add a few more examples of this admirable Charity. The servant of God Mary Villani, of the Order of St. Dominic, whose life was written by Father Marchi (Cf. Rossignoli, *Merv.*, 41) applied herself day and night to the practice of satisfactory works in favor of the departed.

One day—it was the Vigil of the Epiphany—she remained a long time in prayer, beseeching God to alleviate their sufferings in consideration of those of Jesus Christ, offering to Him the cruel scourging of our Saviour, His crown of thorns, His cords, the nails and cross—in a word, all His bitter pains and all the instruments of His Passion. The following night God was pleased to manifest how agreeable to Him was this holy practice.

During her prayer she was rapt in ecstasy, and saw a long procession of persons robed in white garments and radiant with light. They were carrying the emblems of the Passion and entering into the glory of Paradise. The servant of God knew that they were the souls delivered by her fervent prayers and by the merits of the Passion of Jesus Christ.

On another occasion, the Feast of All Souls, she was ordered to work at a manuscript, and to pass the day in writing. This task, imposed by obedience, was a trial to her piety: she experienced some repugnance to obey, because she wished to devote that whole day to prayer, penance, and pious exercises for the relief of the suffering souls. She forgot for a moment that obedience should take precedence over all else, as it is written, *Melior est obedientia quam victimæ*—“Obedience is better than sacrifice.” (1 Kgs. 15:22). Seeing her great charity towards the poor souls, God vouchsafed to appear to her, in order to instruct and console her. “Obey, My daughter,” He said to her; “do the work imposed upon you by Obedience, and offer it for the souls: each

line which you shall write today in the spirit of Obedience and Charity, will procure the deliverance of a soul." It will be easily understood that she labored with the greatest diligence, and wrote as many as possible of those lines, so acceptable to God.

Her charity towards the holy souls did not confine itself to prayer and fasting; she desired to endure a part of their sufferings. One day, whilst praying for that intention, she was rapt in spirit and led into Purgatory. There, amongst the multitude of suffering souls, she saw one more grievously tormented than the others, and which excited her most tender compassion. "Why," she asked, "have you to suffer such excruciating torture? Do you receive no alleviation?" "I have been," replied the soul, "a great length of time in this place, enduring the most frightful torments, in punishment for my former vanity and scandalous extravagance. Thus far I have not received the least relief, because God has permitted that I should be forgotten by my parents, my children, my relatives, and friends: they offer not a single prayer for me. When I was upon earth, being exclusively occupied with my extravagant toilet and worldly vanities, with feasting and pleasure, I cast but a passing thought upon God and my duties. My only serious desire was to further the worldly interests of my family. I am well punished; for you see I am entirely forgotten by all."

These words made a painful impression upon Mary Villani. She begged this soul to allow her to feel something of what she suffered; and at the same instant it seemed as though a finger of fire touched her forehead, and the pain which she felt was so acute as to cause her ecstasy to cease. The mark remained so deeply impressed upon her forehead, that two months afterwards it was still visible, and caused her intolerable suffering. The servant of God offered this, together with prayers and other good works, for the soul to which we have just referred. This soul appeared to Mary at the end of two months, and said that having been delivered by her intercession, she was about to enter Heaven. At the same moment the scar on the forehead disappeared.

Chapter 38

Motives for Assisting the Holy Souls—Examples of Holy Persons—Father James Laynez—Father Fabricius—Father Nieremberg, a Victim of his Charity.

HE who forgets his friend, after death has taken him away from his sight, never had a true friendship.” These words Father Laynez, second General of the Society of Jesus, continually repeated to the sons of St. Ignatius. He desired that the interests of souls should be as dear to them after death as they were during life. Joining example to precept, Laynez applied to the souls in Purgatory a large part of his prayers, sacrifices, and the satisfaction which he merited before God by his labors for the conversion of sinners. The Fathers of the Society, faithful to his lessons of charity, ever manifested particular zeal for this devotion, as may be seen in the book entitled *Heroes and Victims of Charity in the Society of Jesus*, from which I will here transcribe but one page.

“At Münster, in Westphalia, towards the middle of the seventeenth century, an epidemic broke out which each day swept away innumerable victims. Fear paralyzed the charity of the greater part of the inhabitants, and few were found to devote themselves to the relief of the unfortunate plague-stricken creatures. Then Father John Fabricius, animated with the spirit of Laynez and Ignatius, rushed into the arena of self-sacrifice. Putting aside all personal precaution, he employed his time in visiting the sick, in procuring remedies for them, and in disposing them to die a Christian death. He heard their Confessions, administered the other Sacraments, buried them with his own hands, and finally celebrated the Holy Sacrifice for the repose of their souls.

“In fact, during his whole lifetime this servant of God had the greatest devotion towards the holy souls.

“Among all his exercises of piety, the one most dear to him, and which he always earnestly recommended, was that of offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for the departed whenever the Rubrics permitted. As a result of this counsel, all the Fathers in Munster resolved to consecrate one day in each

month to the faithful departed; they draped their church in black, and prayed with all solemnity for the dead.

“God deigned, as He often does, to recompense Father Fabricius, and encouraged his zeal by several apparitions of the suffering souls. Some besought him to hasten their deliverance, others thanked him for the relief he had procured for them; others, again, announced to him the happy moment of their deliverance.

“His greatest act of Charity was that which he accomplished at the moment of his death. With a generosity truly admirable, he made a sacrifice of all the suffrages, prayers, Masses, indulgences, and mortifications which the Society applies to her deceased members. He asked God to deprive him of them for the relief of the suffering souls most pleasing to His Divine Majesty.”

We have already spoken of Father Nieremberg, renowned as well for the works of piety which he published as for the eminent virtue which he practiced. His devotion for the holy souls, not content with sacrifices and frequent prayers, urged him to suffer for them with a generosity which often amounted to heroism.

There was among his penitents at the court of Madrid a lady of rank, who, under his wise direction, had attained a high degree of virtue in the midst of the world, but she was tormented with an excessive fear of death in view of Purgatory which follows it. She fell dangerously ill, and her fears increased to such a degree that she almost lost her Christian sentiments. Her holy confessor employed every means that his zeal could suggest, but to no purpose; he could not succeed in restoring her to tranquillity, nor could he prevail upon her even to receive the last Sacraments.

To crown this misfortune, she suddenly lost consciousness, and was reduced to the last extremity. The Father, justly alarmed at the peril of this soul, retired into a chapel near the chamber of the dying woman. There he offered the Holy Sacrifice with the greatest fervor to obtain for the sick person time sufficient to receive the Sacraments of the Church. At the same time, prompted by truly heroic charity, he offered himself as a victim to Divine Justice, to undergo during this life all the sufferings reserved for that poor soul in the next.

His prayer was heard. The Mass was no sooner ended than the sick lady regained consciousness, and found that she was entirely changed. She was so well disposed that she asked for the last Sacraments, which she received with

the most edifying fervor. Then her confessor, having told her that she had nothing to fear from Purgatory, she expired perfectly calm, and with a smile upon her lips.

From that hour, Father Nieremberg was afflicted with all manner of suffering, both of body and soul. The remaining sixteen years of his life was one long martyrdom and a most rigorous Purgatory. No human remedy could give him relief; his only consolation was in the remembrance of the holy cause for which he endured them. Finally, death came to terminate his terrible sufferings, and at the same time, we may reasonably believe, to open to him the gates of Paradise, since it is written, *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*

Chapter 39

Motives and Incentives to Devotion towards the Holy Souls— Examples of Generosity—St. Peter Damian and his Father—A Young Annamite—The Doorkeeper at the Seminary and the Propagation of the Faith.

EXAMPLES of generous Charity towards the departed are by no means rare, and it is always useful to recall them to mind. We may not omit the beautiful and touching example of St. Peter Damian, Bishop of Ostia, Cardinal and Doctor of the Church, an example which never wearies by repetition. Whilst still young, Peter had the misfortune to lose his mother, and soon afterwards his father marrying again, he was left to the care of a stepmother. Although he showed all possible affection for her, this woman was incapable of returning the love of this dear child; she treated him with barbarous severity, and, in order to rid herself of him, sent him away to her eldest brother, who employed him to take care of the swine. His father, whose duty it was to have prevented this, left him to his unhappy fate. But the child lifted up his eyes to Heaven, where he saw another Father, in whom he placed all his confidence. He accepted all that happened as coming from His divine hands, and resigned himself to the hardships of his situation. “God,” he said, “has His designs in all that He does, and they are designs of mercy; we have but to abandon ourselves into His hands, He will direct all things for our good.” Peter was not deceived; it was in this painful trial that the future Cardinal of the Church, he who was to astonish his age by the extent of his learning, and to edify the world by the luster of his virtues, laid the foundation of his future sanctity.

Barely covered with rags, his biographer tells us that he had not always sufficient to appease his hunger, but he prayed to God and was satisfied.

Meanwhile his father died. The young saint forgot the harshness with which he had been treated, and, like a good son, prayed continually for the repose of his father’s soul. One day he found upon the road a gold piece, which Providence seemed to have placed there for him. It was quite a fortune for the poor child. But, instead of making use of it to relieve his own misery,

his first thought was to carry it to a priest, and beg him to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for the soul of his deceased father. Holy Church considers this trait of filial devotion so touching that she has inserted it at length in the Office of the feast.

“May I be allowed,” says the missionary, Father Louvet, “to add one more incident of my own personal experience? When I was preaching the faith in Cochin-China, a poor little Annamite girl, who had just been baptized, lost her mother. At the age of fourteen she saw herself obliged to provide for her own support and that of her two younger brothers from her scanty earnings, which amounted to about eight sous, or about seven cents a day. What was my surprise when, at the end of the week, I saw her bring me the earnings of two days, that I might say Mass for the repose of their dear mother’s soul. Those poor little ones had fasted during a part of the week to procure this humble suffrage for their departed mother. Oh, holy alms of the poor and the orphan! If my own heart was so deeply touched by it, how much more so the heart of our Heavenly Father, and what blessings it will have called down upon that mother and upon her children.

“Behold the generosity of the poor! What an example and reproach to so many of the rich, extravagant in luxury and pleasure, but miserly when there is question of giving an alms to have Masses celebrated for their deceased relatives.

“Although before all other intentions they should devote part of their alms to have Masses offered for their own souls, or those of their friends, it is proper to use a portion for the relief of the poor, or for other good works, such as for the benefit of Catholic schools, the Propagation of the Faith, and other purposes, according to circumstances. This is a holy liberality, conformable to the spirit of the Church, and very profitable to the souls in Purgatory.”

The Abbé Louvet, from whom we have taken the above, relates another incident which deserves a place here. It concerns a man in humble circumstances who made a generous sacrifice in favor of the Propagation of the Faith, but under circumstances which rendered this act particularly valuable for the future needs of his soul in Purgatory.

A poor porter at a seminary during his long life had, penny by penny, amassed the sum of eight hundred francs. Having no family, he destined this sum for the celebration of Masses after his death. But what can charity not effect when once it has inflamed the heart with its sacred fire? A young

priest was on the point of quitting the seminary for the foreign missions. The old man felt himself inspired to give him his little treasure for the beautiful work of the Propagation of the Faith. He therefore gave it and said, "Dear sir, I beg you to accept this small alms to aid you in the work of spreading the Gospel. I kept it to have Masses said after my death, but I would rather remain a little longer in Purgatory that the name of the good God be glorified." The seminarian was moved even to tears. He would not accept the too generous offer of the poor man, but the latter insisted so earnestly that he had not the heart to refuse him.

A few months later the good old man died. No apparition has revealed his fate in the other world. But is he in need? Do we not know that the Heart of Jesus cannot allow itself to be surpassed in generosity? Do we not understand that a man who was generous enough to consign himself to the flames of Purgatory in order that Jesus Christ might be made known to infidel nations will surely have found abundant mercy before the Sovereign Judge?

Chapter 40

Motives for Assisting the Holy Souls—Obligation not only of Charity, but also of Justice—Pious Legacies—Father Rossignoli and the Devastated Property—Thomas of Cantimpré and the Soldier of Charlemagne.

WE have just considered devotion to the souls in Purgatory as a work of Charity. Prayer for the dead, we have said, is a holy work, because it is a very salutary exercise of that most excellent of virtues, Charity. This Charity towards the departed is not only optional and of counsel, but it is also of precept, no less than to give alms to the poor. As there exists a general obligation of Charity for almsgiving, with how much greater reason are we not bound by the general law of Charity to assist our suffering brethren in Purgatory?

This obligation of Charity is often joined to an obligation of strict Justice. When a dying person, either by word of mouth or by written testament, expresses his last wishes in regard to works of piety; when he charges his heirs to have a certain number of Masses celebrated, to distribute a certain sum in alms, for any good work what so ever, the heirs are obliged in strict justice, from the moment they come into possession of the property, to fulfill without delay the last wishes of the deceased.

This duty of Justice is the more sacred as these pious legacies are frequently but disguised restitutions. Now, what does daily experience teach us? Do people hasten with religious exactitude to acquit themselves of these pious obligations which concern the soul of the departed? Alas! quite the contrary. A family which comes into possession of a considerable fortune doles out to its poor departed relative the few suffrages that he has reserved for his own spiritual benefit; and if the subtilities of the civil law favor them, the members of this family are not ashamed, under the pretext of some informality, to fraudulently set aside the will in order to rid themselves of the obligation of making those pious legacies. It is not in vain that the author of the *Imitation* counsels us to make satisfaction for our sins during our life and not to depend too much upon our heirs, who often neglect to execute the

pious endowments made by us for the relief of our poor souls.

Let such families beware! This is sacrilegious injustice combined with atrocious cruelty. To steal from a poor person, says the Fourth Council of Carthage, is to become his murderer. (*Egentium necatores*). What, then, shall we say of those who rob the dead, who unjustly deprive them of their suffrages, and leave them without assistance in the terrible torments of Purgatory?

Moreover, those who render themselves guilty of this infamous theft are frequently most severely punished by God even in this life. We are sometimes astonished to see a considerable fortune melt away, as it were, in the hands of certain heirs; a sort of malediction seems to hover over certain inheritances. In the Day of Judgment, when that which is now hidden shall be made manifest, we shall see that the cause of this ruin has frequently been the avarice and injustice of the heirs, who neglected the obligations imposed upon them in regard to pious bequests when they succeeded to the property.

It happened in Milan, says Father Rossignoli, that a magnificent estate, situated a short distance from the city, was completely devastated by hail, whilst the neighboring fields remained uninjured. This phenomenon attracted attention and astonishment; it reminded one of the plagues of Egypt. The hail ravaged the fields of the Egyptians and respected the land of Gessen, inhabited by the children of Israel. This was looked upon as a similar scourge. The mysterious hail could not have confined itself exclusively within the limits of one property without obeying an intelligent cause. People knew not how to explain this phenomenon, when an apparition of a soul from Purgatory revealed that it was a chastisement inflicted upon ungrateful and culpable children, who had neglected to execute the last will of their departed father relative to certain works of piety.

We know that in all countries and in all places there are spoken of haunted houses, rendered uninhabitable, to the great loss of their proprietors. Now, if we try to fathom the cause of this, we shall generally find that a soul forgotten by its relatives returns to claim the suffrages justly due to it. Whether it be attributed to credulity, to the excitement of imagination, to hallucination, or even to deception, it will ever remain a well-proved fact to teach unfeeling heirs how God punishes such unjust and sacrilegious conduct even in this life.

The following incident, which we borrow from Thomas of Cantimpré (Rossign., *Merv.*, 15), proves clearly how culpable in the sight of God are

those heirs who defraud the dead. During the wars of Charlemagne, a valiant soldier had served in the most important and honorable positions. His life was that of a true Christian. Content with his pay, he refrained from every act of violence, and the tumult of the camp never prevented him from the fulfillment of his essential duties, although in matters of minor importance he had been guilty of many little faults common to men of his profession. Having reached a very advanced age, he fell ill; and seeing that his last hour had come, he called to his bedside an orphan nephew, to whom he had been a father, and expressed to him his dying wishes. "My son," he said, "you know that I have no riches to bequeath to you: I have nothing but my weapons and my horse. My weapons are for you. As to my horse, sell it when I shall have rendered my soul to God, and distribute the money among the priests and the poor, that the former may offer the Holy Sacrifice for me, and the others may assist me by their prayers." The nephew wept, and promised to execute without delay the last wishes of his dying uncle and benefactor. The old man dying soon after, the nephew took possession of the weapons and led away the horse. It was a very beautiful and valuable animal. Instead of selling it immediately, as he had promised his deceased uncle, he began by using it for short journeys, and as he was well pleased with it, he did not wish to part with it so soon. He deferred under the double pretext that there was nothing that urged the prompt fulfillment of his promise, and that he would await a favorable opportunity to obtain a high price for him. Thus delaying from day to day, from week to week, and from month to month, he ended by stifling the voice of conscience, and forgot the sacred obligation which he had towards the soul of his benefactor.

Six months had elapsed, when one morning the deceased appeared to him addressing him in terms of severe reproach. "Unhappy man," he said, "thou hast forgotten the soul of thy uncle; thou hast violated the sacred promise which thou didst make at my deathbed. Where are the Masses which thou oughtest to have had offered? Where the alms that thou shouldst have distributed to the poor for the repose of my soul? Because of thy guilty negligence I have suffered unheard-of torments in Purgatory. Finally, God has taken pity on me; today I am to enjoy the company of the blessed in Heaven. But thou, by a just judgment of God, shalt die in a few days, and be subjected to the same tortures which would have remained for me to endure had God not shown mercy to me. Thou shalt suffer for the same length of time that I should have suffered, after which thou shalt commence the

expiation of thine own faults.”

A few days later the nephew fell dangerously ill. He immediately called a priest, related to him the vision, and confessed his sins, weeping bitterly. “I shall soon die,” said he, “and I accept death from the hands of God as a chastisement which I have but too well merited.” He expired in sentiments of humble repentance. This was but the least part of the sufferings which had been announced to him in punishment of his injustice; we tremble with horror at the thought of the remaining portion which he was about to undergo in the other life.

Chapter 41

Motives of Justice—St. Bernardine of Siena and the Unfaithful Widow—Disguised Restitutions—Neglect to Execute the Last Will.

ST. BERNARDINE relates that a married couple having no children made a contract that in case one should die before the other, the one who survived was to distribute the property left by the other, for the repose of the soul of the deceased. The husband died first and his widow neglected to fulfill her promise. The mother of the widow was still living, and the deceased appeared to her, begging her to go to her daughter and urge her in the name of God to fulfill her engagement. “If she delays,” he said, “to distribute in alms the sum which I have destined for the poor, tell her on the part of God that in thirty days she will be struck by a sudden death.” When the impious widow heard this solemn warning, she had the audacity to treat it as a dream, and persisted in her sacrilegious infidelity to her promise. Thirty days passed and the unfortunate woman having gone to an upper room in the house, fell through the window and was killed on the spot.

Injustice towards the dead, of which we have just spoken, and fraudulent maneuvers to escape the obligation of executing their pious legacies, are grievous sins, crimes which merit the eternal punishment of Hell. Unless a sincere Confession and at the same time due restitution be made, this sin will meet its chastisement not in Purgatory but in Hell.

Alas! yes, it is especially in the other life that Divine Justice will punish the guilty usurpers of the property of the dead. *Judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy*, says the Holy Ghost. (James 2:13). If these words be true, how rigorous a judgment awaits those whose detestable avarice has left the soul of a parent, a benefactor, for months, years, perhaps even for centuries, in the frightful torments of Purgatory. This crime, as we have said above, is the more grievous, because in many cases these suffrages which the deceased asks for his soul are but disguised restitutions. This fact is in some families but too often overlooked. People find it very convenient to speak of intrigue and clerical avarice. The finest pretexts are made use of

to invalidate a last will and testament, which often, perhaps in the majority of cases, involves a necessary restitution. The priest is but a medium in this indispensable act, bound to absolute secrecy by virtue of his sacramental ministry.

Let us explain this more clearly. A dying man has been guilty of some injustice during his life. This is of a more frequent occurrence than we imagine, even in regard to men who are most upright in the eyes of the world. At the moment when he is about to appear before God, this sinner makes his Confession; he wishes to make a full reparation, as he is bound to do, of all the injury which he has caused his neighbor, but he has not the time left to do so himself, and is not willing to reveal the sad secret to his children. What does he do? He covers his restitution under the veil of a pious legacy.

Now, if this legacy is not paid, and consequently the injustice not repaired, what will become of the soul of the deceased? Will it be detained for an indefinite length of time in Purgatory? We know not all the laws of Divine Justice, but numerous apparitions serve to give us some idea of them, since they “all declare that they cannot be admitted into eternal beatitude so long as any part of the debt of Justice remains to be cancelled.” Moreover, are not these souls culpable for having deferred until their death the payment of a debt of Justice which they had owed for so long a time? And if now their heirs neglect to discharge it for them, is it not a deplorable consequence of their own sin, of their own guilty delay? It is through their fault that these illgotten goods remain in the family, and they will not cease to cry out against them as long as restitution be not made. *Res clamat domino*, property cries out for its lawful owner; it cries out against its unjust possessor.

If, through the malice of the heirs, restitution is never made, it is evident that that soul cannot remain in Purgatory forever; but in this case a long delay to his entrance into Heaven seems to be a fitting chastisement for an act of injustice, which the soul has retracted, it is true, but which still abides in its efficacious cause. Let us therefore think of these grave consequences when we allow days, weeks, months, and perhaps even years to elapse before discharging so sacred a debt.

Alas! how feeble is our faith! If a domestic animal, a little dog, falls into the fire, do you delay to draw it out? And see, your parents, benefactors, persons most dear to you, writhe in the flames of Purgatory, and you do not consider it your urgent duty to relieve them; you delay, you allow long days

of suffering to pass for those poor souls, without making an effort to perform those good works which will release them from their pains.

Chapter 42

Motives of Justice—Barren Tears—Thomas of Cantimpré and his Grandmother—Blessed Margaret of Cortona.

WE have just spoken of the obligation of Justice which is incumbent upon heirs for the execution of pious legacies. There is another duty of strict Justice which regards children; they are obliged to pray for their deceased parents. Reciprocally in their turn parents are bound by natural right not to forget before God those of their children who have preceded them into eternity. Alas! there are parents who are inconsolable at the loss of a son or of a dearly beloved daughter, and who, instead of praying for them, bestow upon them nothing but a few fruitless tears. Let us hear what Thomas of Cantimpré relates on this subject; the incident happened in his own family.

The grandmother of Thomas had lost a son in whom she had centered her fondest hopes. Day and night she wept for him and refused all consolation. In the excess of her grief she forgot the great duty of Christian love, and did not think of praying for that soul so dear to her. The unfortunate object of this barren tenderness languished amid the flames of Purgatory, receiving no alleviation in his sufferings. Finally God took pity on him. One day, whilst plunged in the depths of her grief, this woman had a miraculous vision. She saw on a beautiful road a procession of young men, as graceful as angels, advancing full of joy towards a magnificent city. She understood that they were souls from Purgatory making their triumphal entry into Heaven. She looked eagerly to see if among their ranks she could not discover her son. Alas! the child was not there; but she perceived him approaching far behind the others, sad, suffering, and fatigued, his garments drenched with water. “Oh, dear object of my grief,” she cried out to him, “how is it that you remain behind that brilliant band? I should wish to see you at the head of your companions.”

“Mother,” replied the child in a plaintive tone, “it is you, it is these tears which you shed over me that moisten and soil my garments, and retard my entrance into the glory of Heaven. Cease to abandon yourself to a blind and

useless grief. Open your heart to more Christian sentiments. If you truly love me, relieve me in my sufferings; apply some indulgences to me, say prayers, give alms, obtain for me the fruits of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. It is by this means that you will prove your love; for by so doing you will deliver me from prison where I languish, and bring me forth to eternal life, which is far more desirable than the life terrestrial which you have given me.”

Then the vision disappeared, and that mother, thus admonished and brought back to true Christian sentiments, instead of giving way to immoderate grief, applied to the practice of every good work which could give relief to the soul of her son.

The great causes of this forgetfulness, this indifference, guilty neglect, and injustice towards the dead, is lack of faith. For do we not see that true Christians, those animated by a spirit of faith, make the most noble sacrifices in behalf of their departed friends? Descending in spirit into those penal flames, there contemplating the rigors of Divine Justice, listening to the voice of the dead who implore their compassion, they think only how to give relief to those poor souls, and consider it their most sacred duty to procure for their parents and departed friends all the suffrages possible, according to their means and condition. Happy are those Christians; they show their faith by their works; they are merciful, and in their turn they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed Margaret of Cortona was at first a great sinner; but after she had been sincerely converted, she blotted out her past disorders by great penances and works of mercy. Her charity towards the poor souls knew no bounds; she sacrificed everything, time, repose, satisfactions, to obtain their deliverance from Almighty God. Understanding that devotion towards the holy souls, when well directed, has for its first object our parents, her father and mother being dead, she never ceased to offer for them her prayers, mortifications, vigils, sufferings, Communions, and the Masses at which she had the happiness to assist. In reward for her filial piety, God revealed to her that by all her prayers she had shortened the long term of suffering which her parents would have had to endure in Purgatory; that she had obtained their complete deliverance and entrance into Paradise.

Chapter 43

Motives of Justice—Prayer for Departed Parents—St. Catherine of Siena and her Father, Jacomo.

ST. CATHERINE of Siena has left us a similar example. It is thus related by her biographer, Blessed Raymond of Capua. “The servant of God,” he writes, “had an ardent zeal for the salvation of souls. I will first speak of that which she did for her father, Jacomo, of whom we have already made mention. This excellent man had remarked the sanctity of his daughter, and was filled with respectful tenderness towards her; he advised everyone in his house never to oppose her in anything, but to leave her perfect liberty in the practice of her good works. Thus the affection which united father and daughter increased day by day. Catherine constantly prayed for her father’s salvation; Jacomo took a holy delight in the virtues of his daughter, hoping through her merits to obtain favor before God.

“The life of Jacomo finally approached its end, and he was confined to bed by a dangerous illness. Seeing his condition, his daughter, as was her custom, betook herself to prayer, beseeching her Heavenly Spouse to cure him whom she so tenderly loved. He answered that Jacomo was at the point of death, and that to live longer would not be profitable to him. Catherine then went to her father, and found him so perfectly resigned to leave this world, and without any regret, that she thanked God with all her heart.

“But her filial love was not content; she returned to prayer in order to obtain from God, the Source of all grace, to grant her father not only the pardon of all his faults, but also that at the hour of his death he might be admitted into Heaven, without so much as passing through the flames of Purgatory. She was answered that Justice could not sacrifice its rights; that the soul must be perfectly pure to enter the glory of Paradise. ‘Your father,’ said Our Lord, ‘has led a good life in the married state, and has done much that was very pleasing in My sight; above all, his conduct towards you has been most agreeable to Me; but My Justice demands that his soul should pass through fire, in order to purify it from the stains which it contracted in the world.’ ‘O my loving Saviour,’ replied Catherine, ‘how can I bear the

thought of seeing him who has nourished me, who has brought me up with such tender care, who has been so good to me during his whole life, tormented in those cruel flames? I beseech Your Infinite Goodness not to permit his soul to leave his body until in some way or another it shall have been so perfectly cleansed that it shall have no need to pass through the fires of Purgatory.”

Admirable condescension! God yielded to the prayer and desire of His creature. The strength of Jacomo was exhausted, but his soul could not depart as long as the conflict lasted between Our Lord, who alleged His Justice, and Catherine, who implored His Mercy. Finally, Catherine resumed: "If I cannot obtain this grace without satisfying Thy Justice, let, then, that Justice be exercised upon me; I am ready to suffer for my father all that Thy Goodness may be pleased to send me." Our Lord consented. "I will accept thy proposal," He said, "on account of thy love for Me I exempt thy father's soul from all expiation, but thou shalt suffer as long as thou livest the pain that was destined for him." Full of joy, Catherine cried out, "Thanks for Thy word, O Lord, and may Thy will be done!"

The saint immediately returned to her father, who had just entered upon his agony. She filled him with courage and joy by giving him, on the part of God, the assurance of his eternal salvation, and she left him not until he had breathed forth his soul.

At the same moment that the soul of her father was separated from the body, Catherine was seized with most violent pains, which remained until her death, without allowing her one moment of repose. "She herself," adds Blessed Raymond, "often assured me of this, and indeed it was evident to all who saw her. But her patience was greater than her malady. All that I have related I learned from Catherine, when, touched at the sight of her sufferings, I asked her the cause thereof. I must not forget to say that at the moment her father expired she was heard to cry out, her face beaming with joy and a smile upon her lips, 'May God be praised! My dear father, how I wish I were like you.' During the celebration of the funeral obsequies, when all were in tears, Catherine seemed transported with delight. She consoled her mother and everyone as though unaffected by her father's death. It was because she had seen that beloved soul come forth triumphant from the prison of the body and pass without any hindrance into eternal beatitude. This sight had inundated her with consolation, because a short time previous she herself had tasted the joys of eternal light.

“Let us here admire the wisdom of Providence. The soul of Jacomo could surely have been purified in another manner, and have been immediately admitted into Heaven, like the good thief who confessed our Saviour on the Cross. But God willed that his purification should be effected through the sufferings of Catherine, as she herself had requested, and this not to try her, but to increase her merits and her crown.

“It was fitting that this holy maid, who so ardently loved the soul of her father, should receive some recompense for her filial affection; and since she had preferred the salvation of his soul to that of her own body, her bodily suffering contributed to the happiness of her soul. Thus she always spoke of her sweet, her dear sufferings. And she was right, for these afflictions augmented the sweetness of grace in this life and the delights of glory in the next. She confided to me that long after his death her father Jacomo continually came to thank her for the happiness she had procured for him. He revealed many hidden things to her, warned her of the snares of the demon, and preserved her from all danger.”

Chapter 44

Motives and Incentives to Devotion towards the Holy Souls— St. John of God—Give Alms for your Own Sake—St. Bridget —Blessed Peter Lefèvre.

WE have just seen how holy and meritorious Charity towards the holy souls is before God—*Sancta cogitatio*. It remains to show how salutary, at the same time, it is for ourselves—*Salubris cogitatio*. If the excellence of the work in itself is so powerful an incentive, the precious advantages which we derive from it are no less a stimulus. They consist, on the one hand, of the graces which we receive in recompense for our generosity, and, on the other, of the Christian fervor with which this good work inspires us.

Blessed, said our Saviour, are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. (Matt. 5:7). Blessed is he, says the Holy Ghost, that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor: the Lord will deliver him in the evil day. (Ps. 40). As long as you did it to one of these My brethren, you did it to Me. (Matt. 25:40). The Lord deal mercifully with you, as you have dealt with the dead. (Ruth 1:8). These different sentences express, in their strongest sense, Charity towards the departed.

All that we offer to God in Charity to the dead, says St. Ambrose in his book of *Offices*, is changed into merit for ourselves, and we shall find it after our death increased a hundredfold—*Omne quod defunctis impenditur, in nostrum tandem meritum commutatur, et illud post mortem centuplum recipimus duplicatum*. We can say that the spirit of the Church, the sentiments of the doctors and the saints, are expressed in these words: What you do for the dead, you do in a most excellent manner for yourself. The reason of this is, that this work of mercy will be returned to you increased a hundredfold, in the day when you yourself shall be in distress. We may here apply the celebrated words of St. John of God when he asked the inhabitants of Granada to give him an alms for the love of themselves. To provide for the needs of the sick whom he took into his hospital, the charitable saint traversed the streets of Granada, crying, “Give alms, my brethren, give alms

for the love of yourselves.” People were astonished at this new form of expression, because they had always been accustomed to hear: *alms for the love of God*. “Why,” said they to the saint, “do you ask us to give alms for the love of ourselves?” “Because,” replied he, “it is the great means of redeeming your sins, according to the words of the Prophet: *Redeem thou thy sins with alms, and thy iniquities with works of mercy to the poor.*” (Dan. 4:24). In giving alms, you labor in your own interest, since you thereby diminish the terrible chastisements which your sins have merited. Must we not conclude that all this is true of alms bestowed upon the souls of Purgatory? To assist them is to preserve ourselves from those terrible expiations which we shall not otherwise escape. We may, therefore, cry with St. John of God, Give them the alms of your suffrages: *assist them for the love of yourself*. Generosity towards the departed is always repaid; it finds its recompense in all kinds of graces, the source of which is the gratitude of the holy souls and that of Our Lord, who considers as done to Himself all that we do for the suffering souls.

St. Bridget declares in her Revelations, and her testimony is quoted by Benedict XII (Serm. 4, 12), that she heard a voice from the depths of the Purgatorial flames pronouncing these words: “May those be blessed, may those be rewarded, who relieve us in these pains!” And on another occasion: “O Lord God, show Thy Almighty power in recompensing a hundredfold those who assist us by their suffrages, and make the rays of the divine light to shine upon us.” In another vision the saint heard the voice of an angel saying: “Blessed be upon earth those who, by their prayers and good works, come to the assistance of the poor suffering souls!”

Blessed Peter Lefèvre, of the Company of Jesus, so well known for his devotion towards the holy angels, had also a special devotion towards the souls in Purgatory. “Those souls,” he said, “have bowels of Charity, which are ever open to those who still walk amidst the dangers of this life; they are filled with gratitude towards those who assist them. They can pray for us, and offer up their torments to God in our behalf. It is a most excellent practice to invoke the souls in Purgatory, that we may obtain from God, through their intercession, a true knowledge of our sins and a perfect contrition for them, fervor in the exercise of good works, care to produce worthy fruits of penance, and in general, all virtues, the absence of which has been the cause of their terrible chastisement. (Memorial of Bl. P. Lefèvre. See *Messenger of the S. Heart*, Nov. 1873).

Chapter 45

Advantages of Devotion towards the Holy Souls—Their Gratitude—St. Margaret of Cortona—St. Philip Neri—Cardinal Baronius and the Dying Woman.

IS it difficult to understand the gratitude of the holy souls? If you had ransomed a captive from the galling yoke of slavery, would he be grateful for such a benefit? When the Emperor Charles V took possession of the city of Tunis, he restored to liberty twenty thousand Christian slaves, who before his victory had been reduced to a most deplorable condition. Penetrated with gratitude towards their benefactor, they surrounded him, blessing him and singing his praises. If you gave health to a person dangerously sick, fortune to an unhappy creature who had been reduced to poverty, would you not receive in return their gratitude and their benedictions? And those souls, so holy and so good, will they conduct themselves differently with regard to their benefactors—those poor souls whose captivity, poverty, suffering, and necessity far surpass all captivity, indigence, or malady to be found upon earth? They come especially at the hour of death, to protect them, to accompany and introduce them into the happy abode of their eternal rests.

We have already spoken of St. Margaret of Cortona, and of her devotion to the holy souls. It is related in her biography that at her death she saw a multitude of souls that she had delivered from Purgatory form in procession to escort her to Paradise. God revealed this favor granted to Margaret of Cortona through the medium of a holy person in the city of Castello. This servant of God, rapt in ecstasy at the moment when Margaret departed this life, saw her soul in the midst of this brilliant cortège, and on recovering from her rapture she related to her friends what Our Lord had been pleased to manifest to her.

St. Philip Neri, founder of the Congregation of the Oratory, had a most tender devotion towards the holy souls in Purgatory, and he felt a particular attraction to pray for those who had been under his spiritual direction. He considered him-self under greatest obligation to them, because Divine

Providence had confided them in a special manner to his zeal. It seemed to him that his charity ought to follow them until their final purification was accomplished, and they were admitted into the glory of Heaven. He confessed that many of his spiritual children appeared to him after their death, either to ask his prayers or to return him thanks for what he had already done for them. He declared also that by this means he had obtained more than one grace.

After his death, a Franciscan Father of great piety was praying in the chapel in which the venerated remains of the saint had been deposited, when the latter appeared to him surrounded with glory and in the midst of a brilliant train. Encouraged by the air of amiable familiarity with which the saint regarded him, he ventured to ask the meaning of that bright band of blessed spirits which accompanied him. The saint replied that they were the souls of those whose spiritual guide he had been during life, and whom by his suffrages he had delivered from Purgatory. He added that they had come to meet him on his departure from this world, that in their turn they might introduce him into the Heavenly Jerusalem.

“There is no doubt,” says the devout Father Rossignoli, “that on their entrance into eternal

Chapter 46

Advantages—Gratitude of the Souls—The Return of an Exiled Priest—Father Mumford and the Printer, William Freyssen.

IN order to understand the gratitude of the souls, it is necessary that we should have a most clear conception of the benefit they receive from their liberators; that we should know what it is to enter Heaven. “Who will make known to us,” says the Abbé Louvet, “the joys of that blessed hour! Represent to yourself the happiness of an exile who at length returns to his fatherland. During the Reign of Terror, a poor priest of La Vendée was condemned to be drowned. Having escaped by miracle, he was obliged to emigrate in order to save his life. When peace was restored to the Church and to France, he hastened to return to his beloved parish.

“It was a festival day in the village. All the parishioners went to meet their pastor and father; the bells in the old tower rang joyously, and the church was decorated as upon days of great solemnity. The old man advanced smiling in the midst of his children, but when the doors of the holy place opened before him, when he beheld again the altar that had so long rejoiced the days of his youth, his heart, too weak to bear such transports of joy, broke within his bosom. With a trembling voice he intoned the *Te Deum*, but it was the *Nunc Dimittis* of his priestly life; he fell dying at the foot of the altar. The exile had not the strength to support the joys of his return.”

If such are the joys of the return of an exile to his terrestrial fatherland, who will make known to us the transports we shall experience upon entering Heaven, the true home of our souls? And how can we wonder at the gratitude of the blessed whom we have caused to enter there?

Father James Mumford, of the Society of Jesus, who was born in England in 1605, and who struggled during forty years in the cause of the Church in that country, given up to heresy, composed a remarkable work on Purgatory, which he had printed at Cologne by William Freyssen, a wellknown Catholic publisher. This book obtained a large circulation, and effected a great good among souls, the publisher, Freyssen, being one of

those who derived the greatest advantage from it. This is what he wrote (See Rossignoli, *Merv.*, 16) to Father Mumford in 1649:

“I write, Father, to inform you of the miraculous and twofold cure of my son and my wife. During the holidays, whilst my office was closed, I set to work reading the book, *Mercy Exercised towards the Souls in Purgatory*, which you have sent me to print. I was still engaged in reading the work when I was informed that my young son, four years of age, showed symptoms of a serious illness. The malady made rapid progress, the physician lost hope, and preparations for his burial were already thought of. It occurred to me that I might perhaps save him by making a vow in favor of the souls in Purgatory.

“I went to church early in the morning, and fervently besought God to have pity on me, promising by a vow to distribute a hundred copies of your book among the ecclesiastics and Religious free of charge, in order to remind them of the zeal with which they should interest themselves in behalf of the Church Suffering, and of the practices that are best suited to fulfill this duty.

“I acknowledge that I was full of hope. Upon my return home I found the child better. He already asked for nourishment, although for several days he had been incapable of swallowing even a single drop of liquid. The following day his cure was complete; he arose, went out for a walk, and ate with as good an appetite as if he had never been sick. Penetrated with gratitude, my most urgent desire was to fulfill my promise. I went to the College of the Society of Jesus and besought the Fathers to accept my hundred copies, to keep what they wanted for themselves, and to distribute the remainder among the other communities and ecclesiastics of their acquaintance, that the suffering souls, my benefactors, might be comforted by new suffrages.

“Three weeks later, another and not less serious accident happened to me. My wife upon entering the house was suddenly seized with a violent trembling in all her limbs, which caused her to fall insensible to the ground. She soon lost her appetite and the power of speech. All manner of remedies were employed, but in vain. The malady only increased, and all hope seemed lost. Her confessor, seeing her reduced to this condition, sought words to console me, exhorting me to be resigned to the will of God. As for myself, after the protection I had experienced from the good souls in Purgatory, I could not think of despairing. I returned to the same church, prostrated myself before the Blessed Sacrament, and renewed my supplication with all

the fervor of which I was capable. ‘O my God,’ I exclaimed, ‘Thy mercy is without limit! In the name of Thine Infinite Goodness, permit not that the restoration of my son to health be atoned for by the death of my wife!’ I then made a vow to distribute two hundred copies of your book in order to obtain copious relief for the suffering souls. At the same time I besought the souls that had formerly been delivered to unite their prayers to those of the others still retained in Purgatory. After this prayer I returned home, and saw my servants running to meet me. They told me that my dear wife was considerably better, that the delirium had ceased and her speech had returned. I hastened to her side and found all was true. I offered her nourishment, which she took with relish. A very short time afterwards she was so completely restored that she accompanied me to the church to return thanks to God for all His mercy.

“Your Reverence may place entire confidence in this statement. I pray you to aid me in thanking Our Lord for this double miracle.

—FREYSSSEN”

Chapter 47

Advantages—Temporal Favors—L'Abbé Postel and the Servant of Paris.

THE following is related as a fact by the Abbé Postel, the translator of F. Rossignoli's work. It took place in Paris, he says, about the year 1827, and is inserted as No. 27 in the *Merveilles du Purgatoire*.

A poor servant, who had been brought up as a good Christian in her native village, had adopted the pious practice of having a Mass said every month for the suffering souls. Her employers, having taken her with them to the capital, she never once neglected it, and furthermore made it her rule to assist at the Divine Sacrifice, and to unite her prayers with those of the priest, especially for the soul that had most nearly completed its expiation. This was her ordinary intention.

God soon tried her by a long illness, that not only occasioned her cruel suffering, but also caused her to lose her place and draw upon her last resources. On the day that she was able to leave the hospital, she had but twenty sous left. After addressing a fervent prayer to Heaven, full of confidence, she went in search of a situation. She was told that she would probably find employment in a certain family at the other end of the city, whither she went, and as she was obliged to pass by the Church of St. Eustache, she entered. The sight of a priest at the altar reminded her that this month she had forgotten her usual Mass for the dead, and that this was the very day upon which, for many years, she had been accustomed to do this good work. But what was she to do? If she disposed of her last franc, she would have nothing left, even to satisfy her hunger. It was a struggle between devotion and human prudence. Devotion gained the day. "After all," she said to herself, "the good God knows it is for Him, and He will not forsake me!" Entering the sacristy, she gave her offering for a Mass, at which she assisted with her usual fervor.

A few moments after, she continued on her way, full of anxiety as may be readily understood. Being absolutely destitute of means, what was she to do if she failed to obtain employment? She was still occupied with these

thoughts when a pale young man of a slight figure and distinguished appearance approached her and said, "Are you in search of a situation?" "Yes, sir." "Well, go to a certain street and number, to the house of Madam____. I think you will suit her, and that you will be satisfied there." Having spoken these words, he disappeared in the passing crowd, without waiting to receive the poor girl's thanks.

She found the street, recognized the number, and ascended to the apartments. A servant came out carrying a package under her arm and uttering words of complaint and anger. "Is Madame there?" asked the newcomer. "She may or she may not be," replied the other. "What does it matter to me? Madame will open the door herself if it suits her; I will trouble myself no longer about it. Adieu!" And she descended the steps.

Our poor girl rang the bell with trembling hand, and a sweet voice bade her to enter. She found herself in the presence of an old lady of venerable appearance, who encouraged her to make known her wishes.

"Madame," said the servant, "I learned this morning that you are in need of a servant, and I came to offer my services. I was assured that you would receive me kindly." "Oh, but, my dear child, what you tell me is very extraordinary. This morning I had no need of one; it is only within the last half-hour that I have discharged an insolent domestic, and there is not a soul in the world except her and myself who know it. Who sent you, then?" "It was a gentleman, Madame; a young gentleman whom I met on the street, who stopped me for this purpose, and I praised God for it, for it is absolutely necessary for me to find a place today; I have not a penny in my pocket."

The old lady could not understand who the person was, and was lost in conjecture, when the servant raising her eyes to the furniture of the little parlor, perceived a portrait. "Wait, Madame," she said immediately, "do not puzzle yourself any more; this is the exact picture of the young man who spoke to me. It is on his account that I am come."

At these words the lady uttered a loud cry and seemed to lose consciousness. She made the girl repeat the story of her devotion to the souls in Purgatory, of the morning Mass, and her meeting with the stranger; then throwing herself on the neck of the girl, she embraced her amid a flood of tears and said, "You shall not be my servant from this moment; you are my daughter. It is my son, my only son, whom you saw—my son, dead for the past two years, who owes to you his deliverance, whom God directed to send you here. I cannot doubt it. May you, then, be blessed, and let us pray

continually for all those who suffer before entering into a blessed eternity.”

Chapter 48

Advantages—Temporal Favors—The Neapolitan Woman and the Mysterious Note.

TO prove that the souls in Purgatory show their gratitude even by temporal favors, Father Rossignoli relates a fact that happened at Naples, which bears some resemblance to that which we have just read.

If it is not given to all to offer to God the abundant alms of Judas Machabeus, who sent twelve thousand drachms to Jerusalem for sacrifices and prayers to be offered in behalf of the dead, there are very few who cannot at least make the offering of the poor widow of the Gospel, who was praised by our Saviour Himself. She gave only two mites, but, said Jesus, “*these two mites were of more value than all the gold of the rich, because she of her want cast in all she had, even her whole living.*” (Mark 12:44). This touching example was imitated by a humble Neapolitan woman, who had the greatest difficulty in providing for the wants of her family. The resources of the house depended upon the daily earnings of the husband, who each evening brought home the fruit of his labors.

Alas! one day this poor father was imprisoned for debt, so that the responsibility of supporting the family rested upon the unhappy mother, who possessed nothing but her confidence in God. With faith she besought Divine Providence to come to her aid, and especially to deliver her husband, who languished in prison for no other crime than his poverty.

She went to a wealthy and benevolent gentleman, and, relating to him the sad story of her woes, entreated him with tears to assist her. God permitted that she should receive but a trifling alms, *a carlin*, a piece of money worth about ten cents of our coin. Deeply afflicted, she entered a church to implore the God of the indigent to succor her in her distress, since she had nothing to hope from earth. She was absorbed in prayers and tears, when, by an inspiration, no doubt, of her good angel, it occurred to her to interest the sympathy of the holy souls in her behalf, for she had heard much of their sufferings, and of their gratitude towards those who befriend them. Full of confidence, she went to the sacristy, offered her little piece of money, and

asked if a Mass could be celebrated for the dead. The good priest, who was there, hastened to say Mass for her intention, and ascended the altar for that purpose, whilst the poor woman, prostrate on the pavement, assisted at the Holy Sacrifice, offering her prayers for the departed.

She returned quite consoled, as though she had received the assurance that God had heard her prayer. Whilst traversing the populous streets of Naples, she was accosted by a venerable old man, who inquired whence she came and whither she was going? The unfortunate woman explained her distress, and the use she had made of the small alms she had received. The old man seemed deeply touched by her misery, spoke some words of encouragement, and gave her a note enclosed in an envelope, which he directed her to take to a gentleman whom he designated, and then left her.

The woman went in all haste to deliver the note to the gentleman indicated. The latter, on opening the envelope, was seized with astonishment, and was on the point of fainting away; he recognized the handwriting of his father, who had died some time previous. "Where did you get this letter?" he cried, quite beside himself. "Sir," replied the good woman, "it was from an old man who accosted me in the street. I told him of my distress, and he sent me to give you this note in his name. As regards his features, he very much resembles that portrait which you have there over the door." More and more impressed by these circumstances, the gentleman again took up the note, and read aloud: "My son, your father has just been delivered from Purgatory, thanks to a Mass which the bearer has had celebrated this morning. She is in great distress, and I recommend her to you." He read and reread those lines, traced by that hand so dear to him, by a father who was now among the number of the elect. Tears of joy coursed down his cheeks as he turned towards the woman. "Poor woman," he said, "by your trifling alms you have secured the eternal felicity of him who gave me life. In my turn I will secure your temporal happiness. I take upon myself to supply all the needs of yourself and your whole family."

What joy for that gentleman! What joy for that poor woman! It is difficult to say on which side was the greatest happiness, What is most important and most easy is, to see the instruction to be derived from this incident; it teaches us that the smallest act of charity towards the members of the Church Suffering is precious in the sight of God, and draws down upon us miracles of mercy.

Chapter 49

Advantages—Spiritual and Temporal Favors—Christopher Sandoval at Louvain—The Lawyer Renouncing the World— Brother Lacci and Dr. Verdiano.

LET us here cite another example, the more worthy of mention as a great Pope, Clement VIII, saw therein the finger of God, and recommended its publication for the edification of the Church. “Several authors,” says Father Rossignoli, “have related the marvellous assistance which Christopher Sandoval, Archbishop of Seville, received from the souls in Purgatory. Whilst still a child, he was accustomed to distribute part of his pocket money in alms for the benefit of the holy souls. His piety increased with his age; for the sake of the poor suffering souls he gave away all that he could dispose of, and even went so far as to deprive himself of a thousand little things which were useful or necessary. When he was pursuing his studies at the University of Louvain, it happened that some letters which he expected from Spain were delayed, in consequence of which he found himself reduced to such pecuniary straits that he had scarcely wherewith to purchase food. At this moment a poor person asked of him an alms for love of the souls in Purgatory, and, what had never happened to him before, he was obliged to refuse.

“Afflicted by this circumstance, he went into a church. ‘If,’ said he, ‘I cannot give an alms for my poor souls, I can at least give them the assistance of my prayers.’

“Scarcely had he finished his prayer when, on leaving the church, he was accosted by a beautiful young man, dressed as a traveller, who saluted him with respectful affability. Christopher experienced a feeling of religious awe, as though he were in the presence of a spirit in human form. But he was soon reassured by his amiable interlocutor, who spoke to him with the greatest gentleness of the Marquis of Dania, his father, his relatives and friends, just as a Spaniard who had recently arrived from the Peninsula. He ended by begging him to accompany him to a hotel, where they could dine together and be more at their ease. Sandoval, who had not eaten anything since the

previous day, gladly accepted the gracious offer. They therefore seated themselves at table, and continued to converse most pleasantly together. After the repast, the stranger gave Sandoval a sum of money, entreating him to accept it, and to make use of it for any purpose he pleased, adding that the Marquis, his father, would make him compensation on his return to Spain. Then, under pretext of transacting some business, he withdrew, and Christopher never saw him again. Notwithstanding all his inquiries concerning the stranger, he never succeeded in obtaining any information regarding him. No one, neither in Louvain nor Spain, had ever seen or known a young man corresponding to his description. As regards the sum of money, it was exactly the amount which the pious Christopher needed to defray expenses until the arrival of his letters, and this money was never afterwards claimed from his family.

He was, therefore, convinced that Heaven had worked a miracle in his favor, and had sent to his assistance one of those souls that he himself had relieved by his prayers and alms. He was confirmed in this opinion by Pope Clement VIII, to whom he related the incident when he went to Rome to receive the Bulls raising him to the Episcopate. This Pontiff, struck by the extraordinary circumstances of the case, advised him to make it known for the edification of the faithful; he looked upon it as a favor from Heaven, which proved how precious in the sight of God is charity towards the departed.

Such is the gratitude of the holy souls which have left this world, that they testify it even for favors bestowed upon them whilst they were still in this life. It is related in the Annals of the Friars Preachers (Malvenda, an. 1241) that among those who went to receive the habit from the hands of St. Dominic in 1221, there was a lawyer who had quitted his profession under extraordinary circumstances. He was united by ties of friendship to a young man of great piety, whom he charitably assisted during the sickness of which he died. This was sufficient to move the deceased to procure for him the greatest of all benefits, that of conversion and vocation to a religious life. About thirty days after his death he appeared to the lawyer, and implored his assistance, because he was in Purgatory. "Are your sufferings intense?" he asked of his friend. "Alas!" replied the latter, "if the whole earth with its forests and mountains were on fire, it would not form a furnace such as the one into which I am plunged." Seized with fear, his faith revived, and thinking only of his own soul, he asked, "In what state am I in the eyes of

God?" "In a bad state," replied the deceased, "and in a dangerous profession." "What have I to do? What advice do you give me?" "Quit the perverse world in which you are engaged, and occupy yourself only with the affairs of your soul." The lawyer, following this counsel, gave all his goods to the poor and took the habit of St. Dominic.

Let us see how a holy Religious of the Society of Jesus showed his gratitude, even after death, to the physician who attended him during his last illness. Francis Lacci, a Brother Coadjutor, died in the College of Naples in 1598. He was a man of God, full of charity, patience, and tender devotion towards the Blessed Virgin. Some time after his death, Dr. Verdiano entered the church of the College to assist at Mass before beginning his visits. It was the day on which were celebrated the obsequies of King Philip II, who had died four months previous. When, on leaving the church, he was about to take holy water, a Religious approached and asked him why the catafalque had been prepared, and whose was the service about to be celebrated. "It is that of King Philip II," he replied.

At the same time Verdiano, astonished that a Religious should ask such a question of a stranger, and not distinguishing the features of his interlocutor in the obscurity of the place where he stood, asked who he was. "I am," he answered, "Brother Lacci, whom you attended during my last illness." The doctor looked at him attentively, and recognized perfectly the features of Lacci. Stupefied with astonishment, he said, "But you died of that disease! Are you then suffering in Purgatory, and do you come to ask our suffrages?" "Blessed be God, I am no longer in pain nor sorrow. I need not your suffrages. I am in the joys of Paradise." "And King Philip, is he also already in Paradise?" "Yes, he is there, but placed as much below me as he was elevated above me upon earth. As for you, Dr. Verdiano, where do you propose to make your first visit today?" Verdiano having replied that he was then going to the Patrician di Maio, who was dangerously ill, Lacci warned him to guard against a great danger which menaced him at the door of the house. In fact, the doctor found there a large stone so placed, that on being shaken, it would have fallen and mortally injured him.

This material circumstance seems to have been designed by Providence to prove to Verdiano that he had not been the sport of an illusion.

Chapter 50

Advantages—Prayers of the Souls for us—Suarez—St. Bridget —St. Catherine of Bologna—Venerable Vianney.

WE have just spoken of the gratitude of the holy souls. This they sometimes manifest, as we have seen, in a clearly visible manner, but most frequently they exercise it invisibly by their prayers. The souls pray for us not only when, after their deliverance, they are with God in Heaven, but even in their place of exile and in the midst of their sufferings. Although they cannot pray for themselves, yet, by their supplications, they obtain great grace for us. Such is the express doctrine of two eminent theologians, Bellarmine and Suarez. “These souls are holy,” says Suarez, “and dear to God. Charity urges them to love us, and they know, at least in a general way, to what dangers we are exposed, and what need we have of the Divine assistance. Why, then, would they not pray for their benefactors?”

Why? But it will be answered because they know them not. In that dismal abode, in the midst of their torments, how can they know who are those that assist them by their suffrages?

To this objection it may be replied, the souls feel at least the alleviation which they receive and the assistance which is given them; this suffices, even should they be ignorant of the source whence it came, to call down the benedictions of Heaven upon their benefactors, whosoever they may be, and who are known to God.

But in reality do they not know from whom they receive assistance in their sufferings? Their ignorance of this is nowise proved, and we have strong reason to believe that no such ignorance exists. Would their angel guardian, who dwells there with them to give them all the consolation in his power, deprive them of this consoling knowledge? Is this knowledge not conformable to the doctrine of the Communion of Saints? Would the intercourse which exists between us and the Church Suffering not be the more perfect for its being reciprocal, and that the souls know their benefactors better?

This doctrine is confirmed by a great number of particular revelations,

and by the practice of several holy persons. We have already said that St. Bridget, in one of her ecstasies, heard several souls cry aloud, “Lord God all-powerful, reward a hundredfold those who assist us by their prayers, and who offer to You their good works, in order that we may enjoy the light of Your Divinity.”

We read in the Life of St. Catherine of Bologna that she had a most tender devotion towards the holy souls in Purgatory; that she prayed for them very frequently, and with the greatest fervor; that she recommended herself to them with the greatest confidence in her spiritual necessities, and advised others to do the same, saying, “When I wish to obtain any favor from our Father in Heaven, I have recourse to the souls that are detained in Purgatory; I entreat them to present my request to the Divine Majesty in their own name, and I feel that I am heard through their intercession.” A holy priest of our own day, the cause of whose beatification has been commenced in Rome, Venerable Vianney, Curé of Ars, said to an ecclesiastic who consulted him, “Oh! if it were but known how great is the power of the good souls in Purgatory with the Heart of God, and if we knew all the graces we can obtain through their intercession, they would not be so much forgotten. We must, therefore, pray much for them, that they may pray much for us.”

These last words of Venerable Vianney indicate the true manner of having recourse to the souls in Purgatory; we must assist them, to obtain their prayers and the effects of their gratitude in return—*We must pray much for them that they may pray much for us.*

There is no question here of invoking them as we invoke the saints in Heaven. Such is not the spirit of the Church, which, before all else, prays for the departed, and assists them by her suffrages. But it is nowise contrary to the spirit of the Church nor to Christian piety to procure relief for the souls, with the intention of obtaining in return, through the assistance of their prayers, the favors which we desire. Thus it is a laudable and pious act to offer a Mass for the departed when we are in need of any particular grace. If, when the holy souls are still in their sufferings, their prayers are so powerful, we may easily conceive that they will be much more efficacious when, being entirely purified, these souls stand before the throne of God.

Chapter 51

Advantages—Gratitude of the Divine Spouse of Souls— Venerable Archangela Panigarola and her Father, Gothard.

IF the souls are so grateful towards their benefactors, our Lord Jesus Christ, who loves those souls, who receives as done to Himself all the good which we procure for them, will bestow an abundant recompense, very often even in this life, and always in the next. He regards those who show mercy, and punishes those who forget to show it, towards the suffering souls.

Let us first see an example of chastisement. Venerable Archangela Panigarola, a Dominican Religious and Prioress of the Monastery of St. Martha in Milan, had extraordinary zeal for the relief of the souls in Purgatory. She prayed, and obtained prayers for all her deceased friends, and even for those unknown to her, but of whose death she had been notified. Her father, Gothard, whom she tenderly loved, was one of those Christians of the world who seldom thought of praying for the dead. He himself died, and, quite disconsolate, Archangela understood that her dear father stood more in need of her prayers than of her tears. She therefore took the resolution of recommending him to God by special suffrages. But, strange to say, this resolution was scarcely ever carried into effect; this girl, so pious and devoted to her father, did very little for his soul. God permitted that, notwithstanding her holy resolutions, she continually forgot him, and interested herself in behalf of others. Finally, an unexpected event explained this unwonted forgetfulness, and aroused her devotion in behalf of her father. On the Feast of All Souls she remained secluded in her cell, exclusively occupied in exercises of piety and penance for the relief of the poor souls. Suddenly her angel appeared to her, took her by the hand, and conducted her in spirit into Purgatory. Among the first souls which she saw, she recognized that of her father, plunged in a pond of icy water. Scarcely had Gothard seen his daughter than, coming towards her, he reproached her sorrowfully for having abandoned him in his sufferings, whilst she showed so much Charity towards others, whom she constantly relieved, and frequently delivered those

who were strangers to her.

Archangela stood for some time confused by these reproaches, which she knew she had merited; soon, however, shedding a torrent of tears, she replied, “I will do, my dear father, all that you ask of me. May it please God to give ear to my supplications and speedily deliver you.” Meanwhile she could not recover from her astonishment, nor understand how she could thus have forgotten her beloved father. Having taken her back, her angel told her that this forgetfulness had happened by a disposition of Divine Justice. “God,” he said, “has permitted it in punishment for the little zeal which, during life, your father manifested for God, his own soul, and that of his neighbor. You saw how he was tormented and benumbed in a lake of ice; this was the chastisement of his tepidity in the service of God, and his indifference with regard to the salvation of souls. Your father was not an immoral man, it is true, but he showed little inclination for the acquirement of virtue and for the practice of those works of piety and charity to which the Church exhorts the faithful.... This is the reason why God permitted that he should be forgotten, even by you, who would have given him too much relief. This is the chastisement ordinarily inflicted by Divine Justice upon those who are lacking in fervor and charity. He permits that others should conduct themselves in their regard as they have acted towards God and towards their brethren.” Moreover, this is the rule of Justice which our Saviour has established in the Gospel: *With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again.* (Matt. 7:2).

Chapter 52

Advantages—Charity towards the Holy Souls recompensed by Jesus Christ—St. Catherine of Siena and Palmerine—St. Magdalen de Pazzi and her Mother.

GOD is more inclined to reward than to punish, and if He inflict a chastisement upon those who forget the souls so dear to His Heart, He shows Himself truly grateful towards those who assist Him in the person of His suffering spouses. In recompense He will one day say to them, *Come ye blessed of My Father, possess the kingdom which is prepared for you. You have exercised mercy towards your necessitous and suffering brethren; Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me. (Matt. 25:40).* Very often in this life Jesus rewards compassionate and charitable souls by the bestowal of many favors. St. Catherine of Siena by her charity had converted a sinner named Palmerine, who died and went to Purgatory. The saint gave herself no rest until she had delivered this soul. In recompense, Our Lord permitted her to appear to the saint, or rather our Saviour Himself showed her to His servant, as a glorious conquest of her Charity. Blessed Raymond thus gives the details: In the middle of the fourteenth century, when St. Catherine edified her native city by all sorts of works of mercy, a woman named Palmerine, after having been the object of her tenderest charity, conceived a secret aversion towards her benefactors, which even degenerated into implacable hatred. No longer able to see or listen to the saint, the ungrateful Palmerine, embittered against the servant of God, ceased not to blacken her reputation by the most atrocious calumnies. Catherine did all in her power to conciliate her, but in vain. Then, seeing that her kindness, her humility, her benefits served but to excite the fury of this unfortunate woman, she earnestly implored God to vouchsafe Himself to move her obdurate heart.

God heard her prayer by striking Palmerine with a mortal malady; but this chastisement did not suffice to make her enter into herself. In return for all the tender care which the saint lavished upon her, the wretched woman loaded her with insults and drove her from her presence. Meanwhile, her end

approached, and a priest was called to administer the last Sacraments. The sick person was unfit to receive them, on account of the hatred which she nourished, and which she refused to give up. On hearing this, and seeing that the unfortunate creature had already one foot in Hell, Catherine shed a torrent of tears and was inconsolable. For three days and three nights she ceased not to supplicate God on her behalf, adding fasting to prayer. "What! Lord," she said, "will You allow this soul to be lost on my account? I conjure You, grant me at any price her conversion and her salvation. Punish me for her sin, of which I am the occasion: it is not her, but me, the chastisement should strike. Lord, refuse me not the grace which I ask of You: I shall not leave You until I shall have obtained it. In the name of Your Goodness, of Your Mercy, I conjure You, most merciful Saviour, not to permit the soul of my sister to leave her body until it has been restored to Your grace."

Her prayer, adds her biographer, was so powerful that she prevented the sick woman from dying. Her agony lasted for three days and three nights, to the great astonishment of her nurses. Catherine during this time continued to intercede, and ended by gaining the victory. God could no longer resist, and worked a miracle of mercy. A ray of heavenly light penetrated the heart of the dying woman, showed her her fault, and nerved her to repentance. The saint, to whom God revealed this, hastened to her side. As soon as the sick person saw her, she gave her every possible mark of friendship and respect, accused herself aloud of her fault, received with piety the last Sacraments, and died in the grace of God.

Notwithstanding the sincerity of her conversion, it was to be feared that a sinner who had barely escaped Hell would have to undergo a severe Purgatory. The charitable Catherine continued to do all in her power to hasten the moment when Palmerine would be admitted to the glory of Paradise.

So much Charity could not fail to meet its reward. "Our Lord," writes Blessed Raymond, "showed to His spouse that soul saved by her prayers. It was so brilliant that she told me she could find no words capable of expressing its beauty. It was not yet admitted to the glory of the beatific vision, but had that brightness which creation and the grace of Baptism imparts. Our Lord said to her, '*Behold, My daughter, this lost soul which you have found!*' And He added, '*Does she not appear to you most beautiful and precious? Who would not endure all sorts of suffering to save a creature so perfect and introduce it into eternal life? If I, who am the Supreme Beauty,*

from whom all beauty emanates, have been so far captivated by the beauty of souls as to descend upon earth and shed My Blood to redeem them; with how much greater reason should you not labor one for another, that such admirable creatures be not lost. If I have showed you this soul, it was that you should be all the more zealous in all that concerns the salvation of souls.’”

St. Magdalen of Pazzi, so full of devotion for the dead, exhausted all the resources of Christian Charity on behalf of her mother, after the latter had departed this life. A fortnight after her death, Jesus, wishing to console His spouse, showed her the soul of her beloved parent. Magdalen saw her in Paradise, arrayed in dazzling splendor, and surrounded by saints, who appeared to take great interest in her. She heard the blessed soul give her three commands, which ever remained impressed upon her memory: “Take care, my daughter,” she said, “to descend as low as possible in humility, to observe religious obedience, and to carry out with prudence all that it prescribes.” Saying this, Magdalen saw her blessed mother vanish from sight, and she remained inundated with the sweetest consolation. (Cepari, Life of St. Mag. de Pazzi).

Chapter 53

Advantages—Charity towards the Dead Rewarded—St. Thomas of Aquin, his Sister, and Brother Romano—The Archpriest Ponzoni and Don Alphonso Sanchez—Blessed Margaret Mary and Mother Greffier.

THE Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas of Aquin, was likewise very devout towards the suffering souls, who appeared to him several times, and we know of them by the testimony of the illustrious Doctor himself.

He offered his prayers and sacrifices to God, particularly for the departed souls whom he had known or who were related to him. When he was Professor of Theology at the University of Paris he lost a sister, who died in Capua, at the convent of St. Mary, of which she was Abbess. As soon as he heard of her decease, he recommended her soul to God with great fervor. Some days later she appeared to him, conjuring him to have pity on her, and to redouble his suffrages, because she suffered cruelly in the flames of the other life. Thomas hastened to offer for her all the satisfaction in his power, and solicited also the suffrages of several of his friends. He thus obtained the deliverance of his sister, who came herself to announce the glad tidings.

Some time after this, having been sent to Rome by his superiors, the soul of this sister appeared to him in all the glory of triumphant joy. She told him that his prayers had been heard, that she was freed from suffering, and was going to enjoy eternal repose in the bosom of God. Familiarized with these supernatural communications, the saint feared not to interrogate the apparition, and asked what had become of his two brothers, Arnold and Landolph, who had died some time previous. “Arnold is in Heaven,” replied the soul, “and there enjoys a high degree of glory for having defended the Church and the Sovereign Pontiff against the aggressions of the Emperor Frederic. As to Landolph, he is still in Purgatory, where he suffers much, and is greatly in need of assistance. As regards yourself, my dear brother,” she added, “a magnificent place awaits you in Paradise, in recompense for all you have done for the Church. Hasten to put the last stroke to the different works which you have undertaken, for you will soon join us.” History tells

us that, in fact, he lived but a short time after this event. On another occasion, the same saint, being in prayer at the Church of St. Dominic at Naples, saw approaching him Brother Romano, who had succeeded him at Paris in the chair of theology. The saint thought at first that he had just arrived from Paris, for he was ignorant of his death. He, therefore, arose, went to meet him, saluted him and inquired of him concerning his health and the motive of his journey. "I am no longer of this world," said the Religious with a smile, "and by the mercy of God I am already in the enjoyment of eternal beatitude. I come by the command of God to encourage you in your labors." "Am I in the state of grace?" asked Thomas immediately. "Yes, dear brother, and your works are very agreeable to God." "And you, had you to suffer Purgatory?" "Yes, for fourteen days, on account of little infidelities which I had not sufficiently expiated on earth."

Then Thomas, whose mind was constantly occupied with questions of theology, profited by the opportunity to penetrate the mystery of the beatific vision; but he was answered with this verse of Psalm 47: *Sicut audivimus, sic vidimus in civitate Dei nostri*—"As we have learned by faith, we have seen with our eyes in the city of our God." Saying these words, the apparition vanished, leaving the Angelic Doctor inflamed with the desire of the Eternal Good.

More recently, in the sixteenth century, a favor of the same nature, but perhaps more wonderful, was granted to a zelator of the souls in Purgatory, an intimate friend of St. Charles Borromeo. Venerable Gratian Ponzoni, Archpriest of Arona, interested himself in the cause of the poor suffering souls throughout his whole lifetime. During the pest which carried off so many victims in the diocese of Milan, Ponzoni, not content with administering the Sacraments to the plaguestricken, hesitated not to become sexton, and to bury the dead bodies; for fear had paralyzed the courage of all, and no one would take upon themselves that terrible task. With a zeal and charity truly apostolic, he had assisted a large number of the unfortunate victims in Arona in their last moments, and had interred them in the cemetery near his church of St. Mary. One day, after the office of Vespers, as he was passing by the cemetery in company with Don Alphonso Sanchez, then governor of Arona, he stopped suddenly, struck with an extraordinary vision. Fearing some delusion, he turned towards Sanchez and said, "Sir, do you see the same spectacle which presents itself to my view?" "Yes," replied the governor, who had the same vision, "I see a procession of the dead,

advancing from their graves towards the church; and I avow that until you spoke I could not believe my eyes.” Assured of the reality of the apparition, the Archpriest added, “They are probably the recent victims of the pest, who wish to make known that they are in need of our prayers.” He immediately caused the bells to be rung, and invited the parishioners to assemble on the following morning for a solemn service for the dead. (Life of Ven. Ponzoni.; cf. Ross., *Merv.*, 75).

We see here two persons whose sound judgment guarded them against all danger of illusion, and who, both struck at the same time, seeing the same apparition, hesitate to give credence to it until they were convinced that their eyes saw the same phenomenon. There is not the least room for hallucination, and every sensible man must admit the reality of a supernatural occurrence, attested by such witnesses. Nor can we call in question those apparitions based upon the testimony of a St. Thomas of Aquin, as related above. We must also guard against too easily rejecting other facts of the same nature, from the moment they are attested by persons of recognized sanctity and truly worthy of belief. We must be prudent, no doubt, but ours must be a Christian prudence, equally removed from credulity and from that proud, conceited spirit with which, as we have remarked elsewhere, Jesus reproached His Apostles, “*Noli esse incredulus, sed fidelis*” Be not faithless, but believing. (*Jn.* 20:27).

Monseigneur Languet, Bishop of Soissons, makes the same remark with reference to a circumstance which he relates in the Life of Blessed Margaret Alacoque. Madame Billet, wife of the doctor of the house—that is to say, of the convent of Paray—where the blessed sister resided, had just died. The soul of the deceased appeared to the servant of God, asking her prayers, and charging her to warn her husband of two secret affairs that concerned his salvation. The holy sister gave an account of what had taken place to her Superior, Mother Greffier. The Superior ridiculed the vision, and the one who related it to her; she imposed silence upon Margaret, forbidding her to say or do anything regarding what had been asked of her. “The humble Religious obeyed with simplicity; and with the same simplicity she related to Mother Greffier the second solicitation which she received from the deceased some days later; but the Superior treated this with the same contempt. However, the following night she herself was aroused by such a horrible noise in her room that she thought she would die from fright. She called the sisters, and when assistance came, she was on the point of

swooning away. When she somewhat recovered, she reproached herself with incredulity, and no longer delayed to acquaint the doctor with what had been revealed to Sister Margaret.

“The doctor recognized the warning as coming from God, and profited by it. As for Mother Greffier, she learned by experience that if distrust is ordinarily the wisest policy, it is sometimes wrong to carry it too far, especially when the glory of God and the good of our neighbor is concerned.”

Chapter 54

Advantages—Salutary Thoughts—Make Satisfaction in this Life rather than in the Next—St. Augustine and St. Louis Bertrand—Brother Lourenco—Father Michel de la Fontaine.

BESIDES the advantages which we have already considered, Charity towards the departed is very salutary to those who practice it, because it stimulates them to fervor in the service of God, and inspires the holiest thoughts. To think of the souls in Purgatory is to think of the sufferings of the other life; it is to call to mind that all sin demands expiation, either in this life or the next.

Now, who does not understand that it is better to make satisfaction here, since future chastisements are so terrible? A voice seems to come forth from Purgatory, repeating these words of the *Imitation*, “Better is it to purge away our sins and to cut off our vices now, than to keep them for purgation hereafter.” (*Imit.*, I, 24).

We call to mind, also, this other sentence, of which we read in the same chapter: “There, one hour of punishment will be more grievous than a hundred years of the most bitter penance here.” Then, penetrated with salutary fear, we willingly endure the sufferings of the present life, and we say to God with St. Augustine and St. Louis Bertrand, *Domine, hic ure, hic seca, hic non parcas, ut in aeternum parcas*—“Lord, apply here iron and fire; spare me not in this life, in order that You may spare me in the next.”

Penetrated with these thoughts, the Christian regards the tribulations of the present life, and especially the sufferings of a painful malady, as a Purgatory upon earth which will dispense him from Purgatory after death.

On January 6, 1676, there died in Lisbon, at the age of sixty-nine years, the servant of God, Gaspar Lourenco, Brother Coadjutor of the Society of Jesus, and porter of the professed house of that Institute. He was full of charity towards the poor and towards the souls in Purgatory. He knew not how to spare himself in the service of the unfortunate, and was marvellously ingenious in teaching them to bless God for their misery, which was to purchase Heaven for them. He himself was so penetrated with the happiness

of suffering for Our Lord, that he crucified his flesh almost without measure, and added other austerities on the vigils of Communion days. At the age of seventy-eight, he would accept of no dispensation from the fasts and abstinences of the Church, and allowed no day to pass without taking the discipline at least twice. Even in his last illness, the Brother Infirmarian said that the approach of death did not make him divest himself of his hair shirt, so great was his desire to die upon the cross. The sufferings of his agony, which were most cruel, might have taken the place of the most rigorous penances. When asked if he suffered much, *I am undergoing my Purgatory before departing for Heaven,* ” he replied with a joyous air. Brother Lourenco was born on the day of Epiphany; and Our Lord had revealed to him that this beautiful day was to be also that of his death. He designated the hour on the previous night; and when the Infirmarian visited him at daybreak, he said to him with a smile expressive of doubt, “Is it not today, brother, that you expect to go and enjoy the vision of God?” “Yes,” he replied, “as soon as I shall have received the Body of my Saviour for the last time.” In fact, he received Holy Communion and expired without struggle and without agony.

There is, then, every reason to believe that he spoke with a supernatural knowledge of the truth when he said, *“I am undergoing my Purgatory before departing for Heaven.”*

Another servant of God received from the Blessed Virgin herself the same assurance that his earthly suffering would take the place of Purgatory. I speak of Father Michel de la Fontaine, who slept sweetly in the Lord on February 11, 1606, at Valencia, in Spain. He was one of the first missionaries who labored for the salvation of the people of Peru. His greatest care when instructing the new converts was to inspire them with a sovereign horror of sin, and to lead them to great devotion towards the Mother of God, by speaking of the virtues of that admirable Virgin, and teaching them to recite the beads in her honor.

Mary, on her part, did not refuse the favors asked of her. One day when, exhausted with fatigue, he lay prostrate in the dust, not having strength to rise, he was visited by her whom the Church styles with reason *Comforter of the Afflicted*. She reanimated his courage, saying to him, *“Confidence, my son; your fatigues will take the place of Purgatory for you; bear your sufferings patiently, and on leaving this life your soul will be received into the abode of the blessed.”*

This vision was for Father de la Fontaine during life, but especially at the hour of his death, a source of abundant consolation. In gratitude for this favor, he each week practiced some particular penance. At the moment when he expired, a Religious of eminent virtue saw his soul take its flight to Heaven in company of the Blessed Virgin, the Prince of the Apostles, St. John the Evangelist, and of St. Ignatius, the founder of the Company of Jesus.

Chapter 55

Advantages—Salutary Instruction—Blessed Mary of the Angels—St. Peter Claver and the Sick Negro—The Negro and the Rosary.

BESIDES the holy thoughts which devotion to the holy souls suggests, the latter sometimes contribute directly to the spiritual welfare of their benefactors. In the Life of Blessed Mary of the Angels, of the Order of Mount Carmel, it is said that it is almost beyond belief how frequent were the apparitions of the souls of Purgatory who came to implore her assistance, and afterwards to thank her for their deliverance. Very often they conversed with the blessed sister, giving her useful advice for herself or for her sisters, and revealing things related to the other world. “On the Wednesday within the Octave of the Assumption,” she writes, “whilst saying the evening prayers, one of our good sisters appeared to me. She was clad in white, surrounded with glory and splendor, and so beautiful that I know of nothing here below to which I could compare her. Fearing some illusion of the devil, I armed myself with the Sign of the Cross; but she smiled, and disappeared shortly after. I begged Our Lord not to permit me to be deceived by the demon. The following night the sister again appeared, and calling me by my name, said, ‘I come on the part of God to let you know that I am in the enjoyment of eternal bliss. Tell our Mother Prioress that it is not the design of God to reveal to her the destiny that awaits her; tell her to place her confidence in St. Joseph and in the souls in Purgatory.’ Having said this, she disappeared.”

St. Peter Claver, Apostle of the Negroes of Carthagen, was aided by the souls in Purgatory in his work of the apostolate. He did not abandon the souls of his dear Negroes after their death; penances, prayers, Masses, indulgences, as far as depended upon himself, he applied to them, says Father Fleurian, his biographer. Thus it often happened that those poor afflicted souls, sure of his power with God, came to ask the assistance of his prayers.

The fastidiousness and incredulity of our century, says the same author,

does not prevent us from relating some few additional facts. They may perhaps appear worthy of the raillery of freethinkers, but does it not suffice to know that God is the Master of these occurrences, and that they are, moreover, so well authenticated as to deserve a place in a history written for Christian readers?

A sick Negro, whom he had taken into his room and laid upon his own bed, having heard a noise as of loud moaning during the night, fear made him run to Father Claver, who was kneeling in prayer. "Oh, Father!" he cried, "what is that dreadful noise, which terrifies me and prevents me from sleeping?" "Return, my son," replied the holy man, "and go to sleep without fear." Then, having assisted him to get into bed, he opened the door of the chamber, said a few words, and immediately the moaning ceased.

Several other Negroes, being occupied in repairing a house at some distance from the city, one of them went out to cut wood upon a neighboring mountain. As he approached the forest he heard himself called by his name from the top of a tree, He raised his eyes in the direction whence the voice came, and not seeing anyone, was about to take to flight and join his companions, but he was stopped in a narrow path by a frightful specter, who discharged a shower of blows upon him with a whip furnished with pieces of red-hot iron, and saying, "Why have you not got your rosary? Carry it about you in future, and say it for the souls in Purgatory." The phantom then ordered him to ask of the mistress of the house for three gold pieces which were due to him, and which he was to take to Father Claver, that Masses might be offered for his intention, after which he disappeared.

In the meantime the noise of the blows and the cries of the Negro had brought his companions to the spot, where they found him more dead than alive, covered with the wounds he had received, and unable to utter a word. They carried him to the house, where the mistress acknowledged that in reality she owed the sum of money in question to a Negro who had died some time previous. Father Claver, on being informed of what had occurred, said the Masses which were asked of him, and gave a rosary to the Negro, who ever afterwards wore it, and never omitted to say it daily.

Chapter 56

Advantages—Salutary Instructions—St. Magdalen de Pazzi and Sister Benedicta—Father Paul Hoffée—Venerable Father de la Colombière—Father Louis Corbinelli.

ST. MAGDALEN DE PAZZI, in an apparition of a departed soul, received the most wholesome instruction on religious virtues. There was in her convent a sister named Mary Benedicta, who was distinguished for her piety, her obedience, and all other virtues which are the ornament of holy souls. She was so humble, says Father Cepari, and had such contempt for herself, that, without the guidance of her Superiors, she would have gone to extremes, with the sole view of acquiring the reputation of being a person without prudence and without judgment. She therefore said that she could not help feeling jealous of St. Alexis, who found a means of living a hidden life, contemptible in the eyes of the world. She was so docile and prompt in obedience, that she ran like a little child at the least sign of the will of her Superiors, and the latter were obliged to use great circumspection in the orders which they gave her, lest she should go beyond their desires. In fact, she had gained such control over her passions and appetites, that it would be difficult to imagine a more perfect mortification.

This good sister died suddenly, having had but a few hours of sickness. The following morning, which was Saturday, when, during the Mass which was celebrated, the Religious were singing the *Sanctus*, Magdalen was rapt in ecstasy. During the rapture, God showed her this soul under the corporal form in the glory of Heaven. She was adorned with a gold star, which she had received in recompense for her ardent charity. All her fingers were covered with costly rings, on account of her fidelity to all the rules, and the care she had taken to sanctify her most ordinary actions. Upon her head she wore a very rich crown, because she had always loved obedience and suffering for Jesus Christ. In fact, she surpassed in glory a great multitude of virgins, and she contemplated her Spouse Jesus with singular familiarity, because she had so loved humiliation, according to these words of our Saviour, *He that humbleth himself shall be exalted*. Such was the sublime

lesson which the saint received in reward for her charity towards the departed.

The thought of Purgatory incites us to labor zealously, and to fly the least faults, in order to avoid the terrible expiations of the other life. Father Paul Hoffée, who died a holy death at Ingolstadt in the year 1608, made use of this thought for his own benefit and that of others. He never lost sight of Purgatory, nor ceased to relieve the poor souls who frequently appeared to him to solicit his suffrages. As he was Superior of his brethren in religion, he often exhorted them, first to sanctify themselves, the better to be able afterwards to sanctify others, and never to neglect the smallest prescription of their rules; then he would add with great simplicity, “Otherwise I fear you will come, like several others have done, to ask my prayers that you may be delivered from Purgatory.” In his last moments he was wholly occupied in loving colloquies with Our Lord, His Blessed Mother, and the Saints. He was sensibly consoled by a visit of a very holy soul, who had preceded him to Heaven but two or three days previous, and who now invited him to go and enjoy the eternal love of God. (Menology of the Society of Jesus, Dec. 17).

When we say that the thought of Purgatory makes us use all means to avoid it, it is evident that we have reason to fear that we shall go there. Now on what is this fear based? If we but reflect a little upon the sanctity required to enter Heaven, and the frailty of human nature, which is the source of so many faults, we easily understand that this fear is but too well founded. Moreover, do not the examples we have read above show us clearly that very often even the holiest souls have sometimes to undergo expiation in the other life?

Venerable Father Claude de la Colombière died in the odor of sanctity at Paray, February 15, 1682, as Blessed Margaret Mary had predicted to him. As soon as he had expired, a pious girl came to announce his death to Sister Margaret. The holy Religious, without showing any disturbance or breaking forth into vain regrets, said simply to that person, “Go and pray to God for him, and cause prayers to be everywhere offered for the repose of his soul.” The Father had died at five o’clock in the morning. That same evening she wrote a note to the same person in these terms:

“Cease to be afflicted; invoke him. Fear nothing, He is more powerful to aid us than ever.” These words give us to understand that she had been supernaturally enlightened regarding the death of this holy man, and of the state of his soul in the other life.

Sister Margaret's peace and tranquility at the death of a director who had been useful to her was another sort of miracle. The blessed sister loved nothing except in God and for God; God held the place of all else in her heart, and consumed by the fire of His love all other attachment. The Superior was surprised at her perfect tranquility on the death of the holy missionary, and still more so that Margaret did not ask to do any extraordinary penance for the repose of his soul, as was her custom on the death of any one of her acquaintances in whom she was particularly interested. The Mother Superior asked the servant of God the reason of this, and she replied quite simply, "He is in no need of it; he is in a condition to pray for us, since he is exalted in Heaven by the Sacred Heart of our Divine Lord. Only to expiate some slight negligence in the practice of Divine Love," she added, "his soul was deprived of the vision of God from the time it left his body until the moment when his remains were consigned to the tomb."

Let us add one example more, that of Father Corbinelli. This holy person was not exempted from Purgatory. It is true he was not detained there, but he had to pass through the flames before being admitted into the presence of God. Louis Corbinelli, of the Company of Jesus, died in the odor of sanctity at the professed house in Rome, in the year 1591, almost at the same time with St. Aloysius Gonzaga. The tragic death of Henry II, King of France, gave him a disgust for the world and he decided to consecrate himself entirely to the service of God. In the year 1559 the marriage of the Princess Elizabeth was celebrated with great pomp in the city of Paris. Among other amusements, a tournament was organized, in which figured the flower of the French nobility and chivalry. The King himself appeared in the midst of his brilliant court. Among the spectators, gathered even from foreign lands, was young Louis Corbinelli, who had come from his native city, Florence, to assist at the festival. Corbinelli contemplated with admiration the glory of the French monarch, now at the zenith of his grandeur and prosperity, when suddenly he saw him fall, struck by a fatal blow aimed by an imprudent tilter. The lance badly directed by Montgomery transpierced the King, who expired bathed in his blood.

In the twinkling of an eye all his glory vanished and the royal magnificence was covered with a shroud. This event made a salutary impression upon Corbinelli; seeing the vanity of human greatness thus exposed, he renounced the world and embraced a religious life in the Society

of Jesus. His life was that of a saint, and his death filled with joy all those who were witnesses of it. It took place a few days before that of St. Aloysius, who was then sick in the Roman College. The young saint announced to Cardinal Bellarmine that the soul of Father Corbinelli had entered into glory; and when the Cardinal asked him if it had not passed through Purgatory, "It passed through," he replied, "but it did not stay."

Chapter 57

Advantages—Stimulant to Fervor—Cautions to us— Probability of going to Purgatory—Means of Escaping it— Employment of those Means—St. Catherine of Genoa.

IF holy Religious pass through Purgatory, although not detained there, have we not to fear that we shall not only pass through it, but also remain for a longer or shorter time? Can we live in a security that would be, to say the least, very imprudent? Our faith and our conscience tell us that our fear of Purgatory is well grounded. I go still further, dear reader, and say that with a little reflection you yourself must acknowledge that it is very probable, and almost certain, that you will go to Purgatory. Is it not true that on leaving this earth your soul will enter into one of those three abodes pointed out to us by faith: Hell, Heaven or Purgatory? Will you go to Hell? It is not probable, because you have a horror of mortal sin, and for nothing in the world would you commit one, or keep it upon your conscience after having committed it. Will you go to Heaven? You answer immediately that you think yourself unworthy of such a favor. There remains, then, but Purgatory; and you must own that it is very probable, almost certain, that you will go into that place of expiation.

By setting this grave truth before your eyes, do not think, dear reader, that we wish to frighten you, or take from you all hope of entering Heaven without Purgatory. On the contrary, this hope must ever remain deeply impressed upon our hearts, for it is the spirit of Jesus Christ, who nowise desires that His disciples should stand in need of future expiation. He even instituted Sacraments and established all sorts of means to assist us to make full satisfaction in this world. But these means are too often neglected; and it is especially by a salutary fear that we are stimulated to make use of them.

Now, what are those means which we have to employ in order to avoid, or at least shorten, our Purgatory and mitigate its rigor? They are evidently those exercises and good works which most assist us to satisfy for our faults in this world and to find mercy before God, namely, the following: devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and fidelity in wearing her scapular; charity

towards the living and the dead; mortification and obedience; a pious reception of the Sacraments, especially on the approach of death; confidence in the Divine Mercy; and, finally, the holy acceptance of death in union with the death of Jesus upon the cross.

These means are sufficiently powerful to preserve us from Purgatory, but we must make use of them. Now, to employ them seriously and with perseverance, one condition is necessary: it is to form a firm resolution of satisfying in this world rather than in the next. This resolution must be based upon faith, which teaches us how easy is satisfaction in this life, how terrible is Purgatory. *Be at agreement with thy adversary betimes*, says Jesus Christ, *whilst thou art in the way with him; lest, perhaps, thy adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Amen, I say to thee, thou shalt not go out from thence till thou repay the last farthing.* (Matt. 5:25).

To be reconciled with our adversary in the way, signifies, in the mouth of Our Lord, to appease Divine Justice, and to make satisfaction on our way through life, before reaching that unchangeable end, that eternity where all penance is impossible, and where we shall have to submit to all the rigors of Justice. Is not this counsel of our Divine Saviour most wise?

Can we appear before the tribunal of God burdened with an enormous debt, which we might so easily have discharged by some works of penance, and which we shall then have to pay by years of torment? “He who purifies himself from his faults in the present life,” says St. Catherine of Genoa, “satisfies with a penny a debt of a thousand ducats; and he who waits until the other life to discharge his debts, consents to pay a thousand ducats for that which he might before have paid with a penny.” We must, therefore, begin with the firm and efficacious resolution of making satisfaction in this world; that is the foundation stone. This foundation once laid, we must employ the means enumerated above.

Chapter 58

Means to Avoid Purgatory—Great Devotion to the Blessed Virgin—Father Jerome Carvalho—St. Bridget—The Scapular of Mount Carmel.

A SERVANT of God sums up these means, and reduces them to two, saying, “*Let us cleanse our souls by water and by fire*”; that is to say, by the water of tears, and by the fire of charity and good works. In fact, we may classify them all under these two exercises, and this is conformable to Holy Scripture, where we see that souls are cleansed from their stains, and purified like gold in the crucible. But since we must seek above everything to be practical, let us follow the method we have indicated, and which has been practiced, with so much success, by the saints and by all fervent Christians.

In the first place, in order to obtain great purity of soul, and in consequence to have little reason to fear Purgatory, we must cherish a great devotion towards the Blessed Virgin Mary. This good Mother will so assist her dear children in cleansing their souls and in shortening their Purgatory, that they may live in the greatest confidence. She even desires that they should not trouble themselves on this subject, and that they should not allow themselves to be discouraged by excessive fear, as she herself deigned to declare to her servant, Jerome Carvalho, of whom we have already spoken. “*Have confidence, my son,*” she said to him. “*I am the Mother of Mercy for my dear children in Purgatory, as well as for those still living upon earth.*” In the *Revelations of St. Bridget* we read something similar: “*I am,*” said the Blessed Virgin to her, “*the Mother of all those who are in the place of expiation; my prayers mitigate the chastisements inflicted upon them for their faults.*” (Book 4, chap. 1).

Those who wear the holy scapular have a special right to the protection of Mary. The devotion of the holy scapular, unlike that of the Rosary, does not consist in prayer, but in the pious practice of wearing a sort of habit, which is as the livery of the Queen of Heaven. The scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, of which we here speak, traces its origin back to the

thirteenth century, and was first preached by Blessed Simon Stock, fifth General of the Order of Mount Carmel. This celebrated servant of Mary, born in Kent, England, in the year c1165, whilst yet young, retired into a solitary forest to apply himself to prayer and penance. He chose as his dwelling the hollow of a tree, to which he attached a crucifix and a picture of the Blessed Virgin, whom he honored as his Mother, and ceased not to invoke with the tenderest affection. For twelve years he entreated her to make known to him what he could do that would be most agreeable to her Divine Son, when the Queen of Heaven told him to enter the Order of Mount Carmel, which was particularly devoted to her service. Simon obeyed; and, under the protection of Mary, became an exemplary Religious and the ornament of the Order of Mount Carmel, of which he was elected Superior General in 1245.

One day—it was the 16th of July, 1251—the Blessed Virgin appeared to him surrounded by a multitude of heavenly spirits, and, with a countenance radiant with joy, she presented to him a scapular of a brown color, saying, “Receive, my dear son, this scapular of thy Order; it is the badge of my Confraternity and the pledge of a privilege which I have obtained for thee and for thy brethren of Mount Carmel. Those who die devoutly clothed in this habit shall be preserved from eternal fire. It is the sign of salvation, a safeguard in peril, a pledge of peace and special protection, until the end of time.” The happy old man everywhere published the favor he had received, showing the scapular, healing the sick, and working other miracles in proof of his marvellous mission. Immediately, Edward I, king of England, Louis IX, king of France, and after their example almost all of the sovereigns of Europe, as also a great number of their subjects, received the same habit. From that time commences the celebrated *Confraternity of the Scapular*, which was soon afterwards canonically erected by the Holy See.

Not content with granting this first privilege, Mary made another promise in favor of the members of the Confraternity of the Scapular, by assuring them of a speedy deliverance from the sufferings of Purgatory. About fifty years after the death of Blessed Simon, the illustrious Pontiff, John XXII, whilst at prayer in the early morning, saw the Mother of God appear surrounded with light, and bearing the habit of Mount Carmel. Among other things she said to him, “If among the Religious or members of the Confraternity of Mount Carmel there are any who, on account of their faults, are condemned to Purgatory, I will descend into the midst of them like a

tender Mother on the Saturday after their death; I will deliver them and conduct them to the holy mount of eternal life.” These are the words which the Pontiff places in the lips of Mary in his celebrated Bull of 3rd March 1322, commonly called the *Sabbatine Bull*. He concludes in these words: “I therefore accept this holy indulgence; I ratify and confirm it upon earth, as Jesus Christ has graciously granted it in Heaven through the merits of the most Blessed Virgin.” This privilege was afterwards confirmed by a great many Bulls and Decrees of the Sovereign Pontiffs.

Such is the devotion of the holy scapular. It is sanctioned by the practice of pious souls throughout the Christian world, by the testimony of twenty-two Popes, by the writings of an incalculable number of pious authors, and by multiplied miracles during the past 600 years; so that, says the illustrious Benedict XIV, “he who dares call in question the validity of the devotion of the scapular or deny its privileges, would be a proud despiser of religion.”

Chapter 59

Means to Avoid Purgatory—Privileges of the Holy Scapular— Venerable Father de la Colombière—The Hospital at Toulon— The Sabbatine—St. Teresa—A Lady at Otranto.

ACCORDING to what we have said, the Blessed Virgin has attached two great privileges to the holy scapular; on their part, the Sovereign Pontiffs have added to them the richest indulgences. We shall not speak here of the two indulgences; but we consider it useful to make these two precious privileges thoroughly known, the one under the name of *Preservation*, the other under that of *Deliverance*.

The first is the exemption from the torments of Hell: *In hoc moriens aeternum non patietur incendium*—"He who dies wearing this habit shall not suffer the fire of Hell." It is evident that he who dies in mortal sin, even whilst wearing the scapular, will not be exempt from damnation; and such is not the meaning of Mary's promise. This good Mother has promised mercifully so to dispose all things that he who dies wearing that holy habit will receive an efficacious grace worthily to confess and bewail his faults; or, if he is surprised by sudden death, he will have the time and will to make an act of perfect contrition. We might fill a volume with the miraculous events which prove the fulfillment of this promise. Let it suffice to relate a few of them.

Venerable Father de la Colombière tells us that a young person, who was at first pious and wore the holy scapular, had the misfortune to stray from the path of virtue. In consequence of bad literature and dangerous company, she fell into the greatest disorders, and was about to lose her honor. Instead of turning to God and having recourse to the Blessed Virgin, who is the refuge of sinners, she abandoned herself to despair. The demon soon suggested a remedy to her evils—the frightful remedy of suicide, which would put an end to her temporal miseries to plunge her into eternal torments. She ran to the river, and, still wearing the scapular, threw herself into the water. But, oh, wonder! she floated instead of sinking, and could not find the death she sought. A fisherman, who saw her, hastened to give her assistance, but the

wretched creature prevented him: tearing off her scapular, she cast it far from her and sank immediately. The fisherman was unable to save her, but he found the scapular, and recognized that this sacred livery while she wore it had prevented the sinner from committing suicide.

In the hospital at Toulon there was an officer, a most impious man, who refused to see a priest. Death approached, and he fell into a sort of lethargy. The attendants profited by this to place a scapular about his neck, without his knowledge. On recovering soon after, he cried out in a fury, "Why have you put fire upon me, a fire which burns me? Take it away, take it away!" Then they invoked the Blessed Virgin, and tried again to put on the scapular. He perceived this, tore it off in a rage, threw it far away from him, and with a horrible blasphemy upon his lips he expired.

The second privilege, that of the *Sabbatine* or *Deliverance*, consists in being released from Purgatory by the Blessed Virgin on the first Saturday after death. To enjoy this privilege, certain conditions are to be fulfilled: First, to observe the chastity of our state. Second, to recite the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin. Those who recite the Canonical Office satisfy this condition. Those who are unable to read must, instead of saying the Office, observe the fasts prescribed by the Church, and abstain from flesh meat on all Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays. Third, in case of necessity, the obligation of reciting the Office, the abstinence and fasting, may be commuted into other pious works, by those who have the power to grant such dispensations. Such is the privilege of the *Sabbatine* or *Deliverance*, with the conditions necessary to enjoy it. If we remember what has been said of the rigors of Purgatory and its duration, we shall find that this privilege is most precious, and its conditions very easy.

We know that doubts have been raised concerning the authenticity of the Sabbatine Bull, but besides constant tradition and the pious practice of the faithful, the great Pope, Benedict XIV, whose eminent learning and moderation of opinions are well known, has pronounced in its favor.

At Otranto, a city in the kingdom of Naples, a lady of high rank experienced great pleasure in assisting at the sermons of a Carmelite Father who was a great promoter of the devotion to Mary. He assured his auditors that all Christians who piously wore the scapular, and fulfilled the prescribed conditions, would see the Divine Mother at their departure from this world, and that this great consoler of the afflicted would come on the Saturday after their death to deliver them from Purgatory, and take them into

the abode of the Blessed. Struck with these precious advantages, this lady immediately put on the livery of the Blessed Virgin, firmly resolved to observe faithfully the rules of the Confraternity. Her piety made rapid progress. She prayed to Mary day and night, placed all her confidence in her, and rendered her all possible homage. Among other favors which she asked, she implored that of dying on a Saturday, in order that she might be the sooner delivered from Purgatory. Her prayers were heard. Some years later, having fallen ill, notwithstanding the contrary opinion of her physician, she declared that her malady would carry her to the grave. "I bless God," she added, "in the hope of being soon united with Him in Heaven." Her sickness made such rapid progress that the doctors unanimously declared that she was at the point of death, and that she could not live through the day, which was Wednesday. "You are again mistaken," said the sick lady; "I shall live three days more, and shall not die until Saturday." The event justified her words. Regarding the days of suffering which remained to her as an inestimable treasure, she profited of them to purify her soul and to increase her merits. When Saturday came, she rendered her soul into the hands of her Creator.

Her daughter, who was also very pious, was inconsolable in her bereavement. Whilst praying in her oratory for the soul of her dear mother, and shedding abundant tears, a great servant of God, who was habitually favored with supernatural communications, went to her and said, "Cease to weep, my child, or rather let your grief be turned into joy. I come to assure you, on the part of God, that today, Saturday, thanks to the privileges granted to the members of the Confraternity of the Scapular, your mother has gone to Heaven, and is numbered among the elect. Be consoled and bless the most August Virgin, the Mother of Mercy."

[See [Appendix 2](#) for current information on the Sabbatine Privilege.—Editor].

Chapter 60

Means to Avoid Purgatory—Charity and Mercy—The Prophet Daniel and the King of Babylon—St. Peter Damian and John Patrizzi.

WE have just seen the first means of avoiding Purgatory, a tender devotion towards Mary; the second consists in Charity and works of Mercy of every kind. *Many sins are forgiven her*, said Our Lord, speaking of Magdalen, *because she hath loved much*. (Lk. 7:47). *Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy*. (Matt. 5:7). *Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you shall be forgiven*. (Lk. 6:37). *If you forgive men their offences, your Heavenly Father will forgive you also your offences*. (Matt. 6:14). *Give to every one that asketh of thee: give, and it shall be given to you: for with the same measure that you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you again*. (Lk. 6:30, 38). *Make unto you friends of the mammon of iniquity, that when you shall fail [when you leave this world] they may receive you into everlasting dwellings*. (Lk. 16:9). And the Holy Ghost says by the mouth of the Royal Prophet, *Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor: the Lord will deliver him in the evil day*. (Ps. 40).

All these words indicate clearly that [for our] Charity, Mercy, and Benevolence, whether towards the poor or towards sinners, towards our enemies and those who injure us, or towards the departed who are in great need of our assistance, we shall find mercy at the tribunal of the Sovereign Judge.

The rich of this world have much to fear. *Woe to you that are rich*, says the Son of God, *for you have had your consolation. Woe to you that are filled: for you shall hunger. Woe to you that laugh now: for you shall mourn and weep*. (Lk. 6:24). Certainly, these words of God should cause the wealthy votaries of this world to tremble; but if they wished, their wealth itself could become for them a great means of salvation; they might redeem their sins and pay their terrible debts by abundant alms. *Let my counsel, O king, be acceptable to thee*, said Daniel to the proud Nabuchodonosor, *and*

redeem thy sins with alms, and thy iniquities with works of mercy to the poor. (Dan. 4:24). For alms deliver from all sin and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness. Alms shall be a great confidence before the Most High God to all them that give it, said Tobias to his son. (*Tob. 4:11-12*). Our Saviour confirms all this, and goes even further when He says to the Pharisees, *But yet that which remaineth, give alms; and behold all things are clean unto you.* How great, then, is the folly of the rich, who have in hand so easy a means of ensuring their future spiritual welfare, and yet neglect to employ it! What folly not to make a good use of that fortune of which they shall have to render an account to God! What folly to go and burn in Hell or Purgatory, and leave a fortune to avaricious and ungrateful heirs, who will not bestow upon the departed so much as a prayer, a tear, or even a passing thought! But, on the contrary, how happy are those Christians who understand that they are but the dispensers, before God, of the goods which they have received from Him, who think only of disposing of them according to the designs of Jesus Christ, to whom they must render an account, and, in fine, who make use of them only to procure friends, defenders, and protectors in eternity!

St. Peter Damian, in one of his treatises, relates the following. (*Tracts*, 34). A Roman lord, named John Patrizzi, died. His life, although Christian, had been like that of the generality of the rich, far different from that of his Divine Master, poor, suffering, crowned with thorns. Fortunately, however, he had been very charitable towards the poor, even so far as to give away his garments to clothe them. A few days after his death, a holy priest, being in prayer, was rapt in ecstasy, and transported to the Basilica of St. Cecilia, one of the most celebrated in Rome. He there saw a number of heavenly virgins, St. Cecilia, St. Agnes, St. Agatha, and others, grouped around a magnificent throne, upon which sat the Queen of Heaven, surrounded by angels and blessed spirits.

At this moment appeared a poor woman, dressed in a miserable garment, but having a cape of costly fur upon her shoulders. She knelt humbly at the feet of the Heavenly Queen, and joining her hands, her eyes filled with tears, she said with a smile, “Mother of Mercy, in the name of thy ineffable goodness, I beg thee to have pity on the unfortunate John Patrizzi, who has just died, and who suffers most cruelly in Purgatory.” Three times she repeated the same prayer, each time with more fervor, but without receiving any answer. “Thou knowest well, O most merciful Queen, that I am that

beggar who, at the entrance to your great Basilica, asked alms in the depth of winter with nothing to cover me but my rags. Oh, how I trembled with cold! Then John, whom I petitioned in the name of Our Lady, took from his shoulder this costly fur and gave it to me, depriving himself of it in order to give it to me. Does so great an act of charity, performed in thy name, O Mary, not merit some indulgence?"

At this touching appeal the Queen of Heaven cast a glance of love upon the suppliant. "The man for whom you pray," she replied, "is condemned for a long time to the most terrible suffering, on account of his numerous sins. But since he had two special virtues, mercy towards the poor and devotion for my altars, I will condescend to give him my assistance." At these words the holy assembly testified its joy and gratitude towards the Mother of Mercy. Patrizzi was brought in; he was pale, disfigured, and loaded with chains, which had made deep wounds. The Holy Virgin looked upon him for a moment with tender compassion, then ordered that his chains should be taken off, and garments of glory be put upon him, in order that he might join the saints and blessed spirits who surrounded her throne. This order was immediately executed, and all disappeared.

The holy priest who had enjoyed this vision ceased not from that moment to preach the clemency of Our Lady towards the poor suffering souls, especially towards those who had been devoted to her service, and who had had great charity towards the poor.

Chapter 61

Means to Avoid Purgatory—Blessed Margaret Mary and the Suffering Souls—The Novice and her Father—A Soul that had Suffered without Complaint.

AMONG the revelations of Our Lord to Margaret Mary on the subject of Purgatory there is one which shows how particularly severe are the punishments inflicted for faults against Charity. “One day,” relates Monseigneur Languet, “Our Lord showed His servant a number of souls deprived of the assistance of the Blessed Virgin and the saints, and even of the visits of their angel guardians; this was,” said her Divine Master, “in punishment for their want of union with their superiors, and certain misunderstandings. Many of those souls were destined to remain for a great length of time in horrible flames. The blessed sister recognized also many souls who had lived in religion, and who, on account of their lack of union and charity with their brethren, were deprived of their suffrages and received no alleviations.”

If it is true that God punishes thus severely those that have failed in Charity, He will be infinitely merciful towards those who have practiced this virtue so dear to His Heart. *But before all things*, He says to us by the mouth of His Apostle, St. Peter, *have a constant mutual charity among yourselves, for charity covereth a multitude of sins.* (1 Peter 4:8).

Let us hear Monseigneur Languet again in the Life of Margaret Mary. It is Mother Greffier, he says, who, in the memoir she wrote after the death of the blessed sister, attests the following fact. “I cannot omit the cause of certain particular circumstances which manifest the truth of a revelation made on this occasion to the servant of God. The father of one of the novices was the cause of it. This gentleman had died some time previous, and had been recommended to the prayers of the community. The charity of Sister Margaret, then Mistress of Novices, urged her to pray more especially for him.

“Some days later the novice went to recommend him to her prayers. ‘My daughter,’ said her holy mistress, ‘be perfectly tranquil; your father is rather

in a condition to pray for us. Ask your mother what was the most generous action your father performed before his death; this action has obtained for him from God a favorable judgment.'

"The action to which she alluded was unknown to the novice; no one in Paray knew the circumstance of a death which had happened so far away from that town. The novice did not see her mother until long afterwards, on the day of her profession. She then asked what was that generous Christian action which her father had performed before dying. 'When the Holy Viaticum was brought to him,' replied her mother, 'the butcher joined those who accompanied the Blessed Sacrament, and placed himself in a corner of the room. The sick, on perceiving him, called him by his name, told him to approach, and, pressing his hand with a humility uncommon in persons of his rank, asked pardon for some hard words which he had addressed to him from time to time, and desired that all present should be witness of the reparation which he made.' Sister Margaret had learned from God alone what had taken place, and the novice knew by that the consoling truth of what she had told her concerning her father's happy state in the other life."

Let us add that God, by this revelation, has shown us once more how *Charity covereth a multitude of sins*, and will cause us to find Mercy in the day of Justice.

Blessed Margaret Mary received from our Divine Lord another communication relative to Charity. He showed her the soul of a deceased person who had to undergo but a light chastisement, and He told her that among all the good works which this person had performed in the world, He had taken into special consideration certain humiliations to which she had submitted in the world, because she had suffered them in the spirit of charity, not only without murmuring, but even without speaking of them. Our Lord added, that, in recompense, He had given her a mild and favorable judgment.

Chapter 62

Means to Avoid Purgatory—Christian Mortification—St. John Berchmans—Blessed Emily de Vercell and the Religious who was weary of Choir.

THE third means of satisfying in this world is the practice of Christian mortification and religious obedience. *We bear about in our body the mortification of Jesus*, says the Apostle, *that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies.* (2 Cor. 4:10). This mortification of Jesus, which the Christian must bear about in him, is in its broadest sense, the part that he must take in the sufferings of his Divine Master, by bearing in union with Him the trials he may have to encounter in this life, or the suffering which he voluntarily inflicts upon himself. The first and best mortification is that which is attached to our daily duties, the pains we have to take, the effort we must make to acquit ourselves properly of the duties of our state, and to bear the contradictions of each day. When St. John Berchmans said that *his chief mortification was the common life*, he said nothing else than this, because for him the common life embraced all the duties of his state.

Moreover, he who sanctifies the duties and sufferings of each day, and who thus practices fundamental mortification, will soon advance, and impose voluntary privations and sufferings upon himself in order to escape the pains of the other life.

The slightest mortifications, the most trifling sacrifice, especially when done through obedience, are of great value in the sight of God.

Blessed Emily, a Dominican, and Prioress of the Monastery of St. Mary at Vercelli, inspired her Religious with a spirit of perfect obedience in view of Purgatory. One of the points of the Rule prohibited the Religious to drink between meals without express permission of the Superior. Now, the latter, knowing, as we have seen, the value of the sacrifice of a glass of water in the eyes of God, was generally accustomed to refuse this permission, that she might afford her sisters an opportunity to practice an easy mortification, but she sweetened her refusal by telling them to offer their thirst to Jesus, tormented by a cruel thirst upon the Cross. She then advised them to suffer

this slight privation with a view of diminishing their torments in the expiatory flames of Purgatory.

There was in her community a sister named Mary Isabella, who was too prone to levity, being fond of conversation and other exterior distractions. The consequence was that she had little relish for prayer, was negligent in reciting the Office, and only acquitted herself of this her chief duty with the greatest repugnance. Thus she was never in any haste to go to choir, and as soon as the office was ended she was the first to go out. One day whilst she was hurrying to leave the choir, she passed by the stall of the Prioress, who stopped her. "Where are you going in such haste, my good sister?" she said to her, "and why are you so anxious to get out before the other sisters?" The sister, taken by surprise, at first observed a respectful silence, then she acknowledged with humility that the Office was wearisome to her and seemed too long. "That is all very well," replied the Prioress, "but if it costs you so much to chant the praises of God seated comfortably in the midst of your sisters, what will you do in Purgatory, where you will be obliged to remain in the midst of flames? To spare you that terrible trial, my daughter, I order you to leave your place the last of all." The sister submitted with simplicity, like a truly obedient child; she was recompensed. The disgust which she had experienced thus far for the things of God was changed into devotion and spiritual joy. Moreover, as God revealed to Blessed Emily, having died some time afterwards, she obtained a great diminution of the suffering which awaited her in the other life. God counted as so many hours in Purgatory the hours which she passed in prayer through a spirit of obedience. (*Diario Dominicano*, May 3; *Merve*, 60).

Chapter 63

Means to Avoid Purgatory—The Sacraments—Receiving them Promptly—Medicinal Effect of Extreme Unction—St. Alphonus Liguori.

WE have indicated, as a fourth means of satisfying in this world, the use of the Sacraments, and especially a holy and Christian reception of the last Sacraments on the approach of death.

The Divine Master admonishes us in the Gospel to prepare ourselves well for death, in order that it may be precious in His eyes and the worthy crowning of a Christian life. His love for us makes Him desire ardently that we should leave this world entirely purified, divested of all debt towards Divine Justice; and that on appearing before God, we should be found worthy to be admitted among the elect, without need of passing through Purgatory. It is for this end that He ordinarily sends us the pains of sickness before death, and that He has instituted the Sacraments, to aid us in sanctifying our sufferings, and the more perfectly to dispose us to appear before His face.

The Sacraments which we receive in time of sickness are three: Confession, which we may receive as soon as we wish; Holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction, which we may receive as soon as there is danger of death. This circumstance of the danger of death must be taken in the broad sense of the word.

It is not necessary that there should be an imminent danger of dying, and that all hope of recovery be lost; it is not even necessary that the danger of death be certain; it suffices that it be probable, and prudently presumed, even when there is no other infirmity than old age. (See a pamphlet, approved by all the Bishops of Belgium, and entitled *Les Médecins et les Familles*, Brussels, Maison Goemaere).

The effects of the Sacraments, well received, correspond to all the needs, all the lawful desires of the sick. These divine remedies purify the soul from her sins, and increase her treasure of sanctifying grace; they fortify the sick person, and enable him to bear his sufferings with patience, to triumph over

the assaults of the demon at the last moment, and to make a generous sacrifice of his life to God. Moreover, besides the effects which they produce upon the soul, the Sacraments exert a salutary influence upon the body. Extreme Unction especially comforts the sick person and alleviates his sufferings; it even restores him to health, if God judges it expedient for his salvation.

The Sacraments are, then, for the faithful, an immense assistance, an inestimable benefit. It is not, therefore, surprising that the enemy of souls makes it his first object to deprive them of so great a good. Not being able to rob the Church of her Sacraments, he endeavors to keep them from the sick, either by making them entirely neglect to receive them, or that they receive them so late as to lose all their benefit. Alas! how many souls allow themselves to be taken in this snare! How many souls for not promptly receiving the Sacraments fall into Hell, or into the deepest abyss of Purgatory!

To avoid this misfortune, the first care of a Christian, in case of sickness, must be to think of the Sacraments, and to receive them as promptly as possible. We say, that he should receive them promptly, whilst he is still in possession of the use of his faculties, and we dwell upon this circumstance for the following reasons. 1) In receiving the Sacraments promptly, the patient, having yet sufficient strength to prepare himself properly, derives all the fruit of them. 2) He needs to be provided as soon as possible with the Divine assistance, in order to support his sufferings, to overcome temptation, and to sanctify the precious time of sickness. 3) It is only by receiving the holy oils in time, that we can experience the effects of a bodily cure. For we must here remark an important point: the sacramental remedy of the holy unction produces its effect upon the sick person in the same manner as medical remedies. It resembles an exquisite medicine that assists nature, in which there is still supposed to be a certain vigor; so that Extreme Unction cannot exercise a medicinal virtue when nature has become too feeble, and life is almost extinguished. Thus a great number of sick persons die because they put off receiving the Sacraments until they are at the last extremity; whilst it is not unusual to see those entirely recover who hasten to receive them.

St. Alphonsus speaks of a sick man who delayed to receive Extreme Unction until it was almost too late, for he died shortly afterwards. (Praxis Confess., n. 274). Now, God made known by way of revelation, says the

holy doctor, that if he had received that Sacrament earlier, he would have been restored to health. However, the most precious effect of the last Sacraments is that which they produce upon the soul; they purify it from the remains of sin, and take away, or at least diminish, its debt of temporal punishment; they strengthen it to bear suffering in a holy manner; they fill it with confidence in God, and assist it to accept death from His hands in union with that of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 64

Means to Avoid Purgatory—Confidence in God—St. Francis de Sales—St. Philip Neri and Sister Scholastica.

THE fifth means for obtaining favor before the tribunal of God is to have great confidence in His Mercy. *In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped; let me never be confounded*, says the Prophet. (Ps. 30). Surely He who said to the good thief, “This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise,” well merits that we should have an unbounded confidence in Him. St. Francis de Sales avowed that if he considered his misery only, he deserved Hell; but full of humble confidence in the mercy of God and in the merits of Jesus Christ, he firmly hoped to share the happiness of the elect. “And what would Our Lord do with His eternal life,” said he, “if not give it to us, poor, little, insignificant creatures as we are, who have no hope but in His goodness? Blessed be God! I have this firm confidence in the depth of my heart, that we shall live eternally with God. We shall one day be all united in Heaven. Take courage; we shall soon be there above.”

“We must,” he said again, “die between two pillows; the one, of the humble confession that we merit nothing but Hell; the other, of an entire confidence that God, in His mercy, will give us Paradise.” Having one day met a gentleman who was filled with excessive fear of the judgments of God, he said to him, “He who has a true desire to serve God and to avoid sin, must in nowise allow himself to be tormented by the thought of death and judgment. If they are to be feared, it is not with that fear which dejects and depresses the vigor of the soul; but a fear tempered with confidence, and therefore salutary. Hope in God: who hopes in Him shall never be confounded.”

We read in the Life of St. Philip Neri, that having gone one day to the Convent of St. Martha in Rome, one of the Religious, named Scholastica, desired to speak to him in private. This lady had been tormented for a long time with a thought of despair, which she had not dared to make known to anyone; but, full of confidence in the saint, she resolved to open her heart to him. When she went to him, before she had time to say a word, the man of

God said to her with a smile, "You are very wrong, my daughter, to believe that you are destined for eternal flames: Paradise belongs to you!" "I cannot believe it, Father," she replied with a deep sigh. "You do not believe it? That is folly on your part, you will see. Tell me, Scholastica, for whom did Jesus die?" "He died for sinners." "And now tell me are you a saint?" "Alas!" replied she weeping, "I am a great sinner." "Therefore Jesus died for you, and most assuredly it was to open Heaven for you. It is thus clear that Heaven is yours. For as to your sins, you detest them, I have no doubt." The good Religious was touched by these words. Light entered her soul, the temptation vanished, and from that moment those sweet words, *Paradise is yours*, filled her with confidence and joy.

Chapter 65

Means to Avoid Purgatory—Holy Acceptation of Death— Father Aquitanus—St. Alphonsus Liguori—Venerable Frances of Pampeluna and the Person who was not Resigned to Die— Father Vincent Caraffa and the Condemned Man—Sister Mary of St. Joseph and Mother Isabella—St. John of the Cross —Sweetness of the Death of the Saints

THE sixth means to avoid Purgatory is the humble and submissive acceptance of death in expiation of our sins: it is a generous act, by which we make a sacrifice of our life to God, in union with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the Cross.

Do you desire an example of this holy resignation of life into the hands of the Creator? On December 2, 1638, there died at Brisach, on the right bank of the Rhine, Father George Aquitanus, of the Society of Jesus. Twice he had devoted his life to the service of the plague-stricken. It happened that on two different occasions the pest raged with such fury that it was almost impossible to approach the sick without being attacked by the contagion. Everyone fled and abandoned the dying to their unhappy fate. But Father Aquitanus, placing his life in the hands of God, made himself the servant and the apostle of the sick; he employed himself exclusively in relieving their sufferings and in administering to them the Sacraments.

God preserved him during the first visitation of the pest; but when it again broke out with renewed violence, and the man of God was called upon for the second time to devote himself to the care of the sick, God this time accepted his sacrifice.

When, a victim of his Charity, he lay extended upon his bed of death, he was asked if he willingly made the sacrifice of his life to God. "Oh!" he replied full of joy, "if I had a million lives to offer to Him, He knows how readily I would give them to Him." Such an act, it is easy to understand, is very meritorious in the sight of God. Does it not resemble that supreme act of charity accomplished by the martyrs who died for Jesus Christ, and which,

like Baptism, effaces all sin and cancels all debts? *Greater love than this, says Our Lord, no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friend.* (Jn. 15:13).

To make this act in time of sickness, it is useful, not to say necessary, that the patient should understand his condition, and know that his end is approaching. It is therefore to do him great injury to withhold this knowledge from him through a false delicacy. “*We must,*” says St. Alphonsus, “*prudently impart to the sick person the knowledge of his danger.*”

If the patient endeavors to deceive himself with illusions, if, instead of resigning himself into the hands of God, he thinks only of his cure, even when he receives all the Sacraments, he does himself a deplorable wrong.

We read in the Life of Venerable Mother Frances of the Blessed Sacrament, a Religious of Pampeluna (by Joachim of St. Mary; Rossign., *Merv.*, 26), that a soul was condemned to a long Purgatory for not having had a true submission to the Divine Will upon her deathbed. She was otherwise a very pious young person, but when the icy hand of death came to touch her in the flower of her youth, nature recoiled, and she had not the courage to resign herself into the ever-loving hands of her Heavenly Father—she would not die yet. She expired, nevertheless, and the Venerable Mother Frances, who received frequent visits from the souls of the departed, learned that this soul had to expiate by long sufferings her want of submission to the decrees of her Creator.

The Life of Venerable Father Caraffa (by Father Bartoli; Rossign., *Merv.*, 97) furnishes us with a more consoling example.

Father Vincent Caraffa, General of the Society of Jesus, was called to prepare for death a young nobleman who was condemned to be executed, and who thought himself condemned to death unjustly. To die in the flower of one’s age, when one is rich, happy, and when the future smiles upon us, is hard, we must own; yet a criminal who is a prey to remorse of conscience may resign himself to it, and accept it as a chastisement in expiation for his crime. But what shall we say of a person who is innocent?

The Father had, therefore, a difficult task to accomplish. Nevertheless, assisted by grace, he knew so well how to manage this unhappy man, he spoke with such unction of the faults of his past life and of the necessity of making satisfaction to Divine Justice, he made him understand so thoroughly how God permitted this temporal chastisement for his good, that he crushed rebellious nature and completely changed the sentiments of his heart. The

young man looked upon his sentence as an expiation which would obtain for him the pardon of God, mounted the scaffold not only with resignation, but also with a truly Christian joy. Up to the last moment, even under the axe of the executioner, he blessed God and implored His Mercy, to the great edification of all those who assisted at his execution.

At the moment when his head fell, Father Caraffa saw his soul rise triumphantly to Heaven. He immediately went to the mother of the young man to console her by relating what he had seen. He was so transported with joy, that on returning to his cell he ceased not to cry aloud, "O happy man! O happy man!"

The family wished to have a great number of Masses celebrated for the repose of his soul. "It is superfluous," replied the Father; "we must rather thank God and rejoice, for I declare to you that his soul has not even passed through Purgatory." Another day, whilst engaged in some work, he suddenly stopped, his countenance changed, and he looked towards Heaven; then he was heard to cry out, "*O happy lot! O happy lot!*" And when his companion asked him for an explanation of these words, "Ah! my dear Father," he replied, "it was the soul of that condemned man which appeared to me in glory. Oh, how profitable to him has been his resignation!"

Sister Mary of St. Joseph, one of the four first Carmelites who embraced the reform of St. Teresa, was a Religious of great virtue. The end of her career approached, and Our Lord, wishing that His spouse should be received into Heaven in triumph on breathing her last sigh, purified and adorned her soul by the sufferings which marked the end of her life.

During the four last days which she passed upon earth, she lost her speech and the use of her senses; she was a prey to frightful agony, and the Religious were heartbroken to see her in that state. Mother Isabella of St. Dominic, Prioress of the convent, approached the sick Religious, and suggested to her to make many acts of resignation, and total abandonment of herself into the hands of God. Sister Mary of St. Joseph heard her, and made these acts interiorly, but without being able to give any exterior sign thereof.

She died in these holy dispositions, and, on the very day of her death, whilst Mother Isabella was hearing Mass and praying for the repose of her soul, Our Lord showed her the soul of His faithful spouse crowned in glory, and said, "*She is of the number of those who follow the Lamb.*" Sister Mary of St. Joseph, on her part, thanked Mother Isabella for all the good she had procured for her at the hour of death. She added that the acts of resignation

which she had suggested to her had merited for her great glory in Paradise and had exempted her from the pains of Purgatory. (Life of Mother Isabella, lib. 3, c. 7). What happiness to quit this miserable life, to enter the only true and blessed one! We all may enjoy this happiness, if we employ the means which Jesus Christ has given us for making satisfaction in this world, and for preparing our souls perfectly to appear in His presence. The soul thus prepared is filled in her last hour with the sweetest confidence; she has, as it were, a foretaste of Heaven; the experiences which St. John of the Cross has written on the death of a saint in his *Living Flame of Love*.

“Perfect love of God,” he says, “renders death agreeable, making the soul taste the greatest sweetness therein. The soul that loves is inundated with a torrent of delights at the approach of that moment when she is about to enjoy the full possession of her Beloved. On the point of being delivered from this prison of the body, she seems already to contemplate the glories of Paradise, and all within her is transformed into love.”

Appendix 1

Indulgences

*(The following information is taken from New Regulations on Indulgences. Imprimatur: ✠
Aloysius J. Wycislo, D.D., Green Bay, Wisconsin, February 5, 1969.)*

An indulgence is the remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven. The faithful, properly disposed and under certain definite conditions, can acquire this remission through the Church, which, as minister of the Redemption, authoritatively dispenses and applies the treasure of the satisfactions of Christ and the saints.

That the Church has the power of granting indulgences is a matter of faith, defined by the Council of Trent on December 4, 1563, in the 25th session.

A partial indulgence frees one from part of the temporal punishment due to sin (punishment which must be undergone either in this life or in Purgatory), and a plenary indulgence frees one from the *whole* of the temporal punishment due to sin. Both partial and plenary indulgences can always be applied to the departed by way of suffrage.

One must always remember that a prayer or good work itself is more precious than the indulgence that may be attached to it; for an indulgence is merely the remission of temporal punishment; whereas, a prayer devoutly said means an increase of grace and merit for eternity. There is all the difference between the temporal and the eternal.

To be capable of gaining an indulgence for oneself, a person must be baptized, not excommunicated, and in the state of grace, at least when complying with the last work prescribed. One must have at least the general intention of gaining indulgences and must comply with the conditions prescribed. To gain an indulgence attached to a prayer, it is sufficient to recite the prescribed prayer alone or together with another person, or even to follow with the mind while the prayer is recited by another.

Because of the supreme excellence of participating in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and because of the surpassing efficacy of the Holy Sacrifice as regards sanctification and purification, the Mass is not enriched with

indulgences.

HOW TO GAIN A PLENARY INDULGENCE

In order to gain a plenary indulgence, one must perform the prescribed work (for example, reciting the Rosary under the circumstances specified below) and also fulfill three conditions: sacramental Confession, Eucharistic Communion, and prayer for the intention of the Supreme Pontiff. In addition, it is required that all attachment to sin, even venial sin, be absent. If this disposition is in any way less than complete, or if the three prescribed conditions are not fulfilled, the indulgence will be only partial.

The conditions of Confession, Communion, and prayer for the Pope's intentions may be fulfilled several days before or after the performance of the prescribed work. But it is fitting that the Communion and the prayer for the Pope's intention be on the same day the work is performed. And though one Confession suffices for gaining several plenary indulgences on different days (for gaining daily plenary indulgences, go to Confession at least once every two weeks), Communion must be received and prayer for the Pope's intention said for the gaining of each plenary indulgence. The condition of praying for the Pope's intention is fully satisfied by reciting one Our Father and one Hail Mary, though one is free to recite any other prayer.

A person can gain only one plenary indulgence per day. There is one exception to this rule: A person who has already gained a plenary indulgence for the day and who then on that same day is in danger of death can also gain the plenary indulgence connected with the Apostolic Blessing, usually imparted with the Last Sacraments. If a priest cannot be present, a plenary indulgence at the hour of death can still be gained; see the explanation below. (This indulgence too can be gained even if the person has already gained a plenary indulgence on that day.)

Worthy of special mention are the following four ways of gaining a plenary indulgence:

1. A plenary indulgence is granted to one of the faithful who visits the Blessed Sacrament to adore It for at least one-half an hour.
2. A plenary indulgence is granted to one of the faithful who spends at least half an hour in reading Sacred Scripture with the veneration due to the divine word, as spiritual reading.
3. A plenary indulgence is granted to one of the faithful who performs the pious exercise of the Way of the Cross. This exercise must be made

before stations of the Way of the Cross legitimately erected. For the erection of the Way of the Cross, 14 crosses are required, to which it is customary to add 14 pictures or images which represent the stations of Jerusalem. According to the more common practice, this pious exercise consists of 14 devout readings, to which some vocal prayers are added. However, nothing more is required than a devout meditation on the Passion and Death of Our Lord, which need not be a particular consideration of the individual mysteries of the stations. A movement from one station to the next is required; however, when there is such a number of people that movement from station to station cannot be made without disturbance, it is sufficient if the one who leads the stations moves from one to the other, the rest remaining in their places. Those “impeded” from making the stations can gain the same plenary indulgence by devout reading and meditation on the Passion and Death of Christ for at least half an hour.

4. A plenary indulgence is granted to one of the faithful who recites the Rosary of at least five decades, with devout meditation on the mysteries, in a church or public oratory, or in a family group, or in a religious community, or in some pious Association. To the vocal recitation must be added devout meditation on the mysteries. The five decades are to be recited in continuity; and, if recited in public, the respective mystery is to be announced before each decade. In private recitation, however, it suffices that one simply add meditation on the mysteries to the vocal recitation.

Plenary Indulgence at the Moment of Death

(In articulo mortis)

To the faithful in danger of death, who cannot be assisted by a priest to bring them the Sacraments and impart the Apostolic Blessing with its plenary indulgence, Holy Mother Church nevertheless grants a plenary indulgence to be acquired at the point of death, provided they are properly disposed and have been in the habit of reciting some prayers during their lifetime. The use of a crucifix or a cross to gain this indulgence is praiseworthy. The condition *provided they have been in the habit of reciting some prayers during their lifetime* supplies in such cases for the three usual conditions required for the gaining of a plenary indulgence. The plenary

indulgence at the point of death can be acquired by the faithful even if they have already obtained another plenary indulgence on the same day.

HOW TO GAIN A PARTIAL INDULGENCE

One of the faithful who, with at least a contrite heart, performs a work enriched with a partial indulgence, obtains, in addition to the remission of temporal punishment acquired by the action itself, an equal remission of punishment through the power of the Church. In other words, the remission is doubled, and that as often as the prescribed work is performed. (More than one partial indulgence can be gained per day.) A partial indulgence is no longer designated by “days” or “years,” but is designated simply as a “partial indulgence.” How much punishment is remitted depends upon the degree of charity of the one performing the act and is in proportion to the degree to which the act itself is performed in a more perfect way.

There are three general ways to gain a partial indulgence. These are as follows:

1. A partial indulgence is granted to one of the faithful who, in the performance of his duties and the bearing of the burdens of life, raises his mind to God in humble trust, adding—even if only mentally—some pious invocation [ejaculation].

This first way of gaining a partial indulgence takes the faithful by the hand, as it were, and leads them to follow the admonition of the Saviour: “One ought always to pray, and not to faint.” It urges each one to fulfill his duties in union with Christ, and in such a way that this union may ever become more intimate.

The invocation may be very short, consisting of only a few words, or even of only one word. For example: “My God, I Love Thee.” “Jesus!” “All for Thee.” “Thy Kingdom come.” “Jesus, Mary, Joseph, save souls.” “Heart of Jesus, I trust in Thee.” “Mary Immaculate!” “God’s holy will be done.” “Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us now and at the hour of our death. Amen.”

It must be noted that as far as indulgences are concerned, an invocation is no longer considered a distinct and complete work in itself. Rather, it is a help whereby the faithful, in the performance of their duties and in bearing the burdens of life, raise their minds to God in humble confidence. Hence the pious invocation completes the raising of the mind to God. Both are as gems which are joined to our ordinary activities to adorn them; or to change the

figure of speech, they are as salt which gives savor to such activities.

That invocation is to be preferred which is best suited to the activity engaged in and to one's disposition of mind, whether it springs spontaneously from the heart or is selected from such as have been approved by the long-standing use of the faithful.

By this concession, only those actions are enriched with indulgences in which, in the performance of their duties, the faithful raise their minds to God. Because of human frailty, this is something that is not so commonly done. How many hours, how many days are spent without raising our minds and hearts to God, without an "All for Thee, Most Sacred Heart of Jesus," "Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us," "O Lord, increase my faith," "O God, be merciful to me a sinner," "My God and my All," "Thy will be done," "Sweet Heart of Mary, be my salvation," "Holy Mary, pray for us," "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!" or one of dozens of other invocations.

It is easy to see that if one is diligent and fervent in spreading acts of this kind throughout the moments of the day, he justly merits (in addition to a copious increase of grace) a more generous remission of the temporal punishment due to his sins. And what is more, if in his great charity he applies all these partial indulgences to the Poor Souls in Purgatory, he can send many of them to Heaven, there to love, adore, and praise God and to pray for their earthly benefactor.

2. A partial indulgence is granted to one of the faithful who, animated by a spirit of faith and mercy, gives of himself or of his goods to the service of the brethren who are in need.

Not every work of charity is thus indulgenced, but only those that are for the service of the brethren who are in need, say of food or clothing for the body or of instruction or comfort for the soul. Since such good works are very pleasing to God, they bring great merit to the one who performs them; they also make satisfaction for the temporal punishment due to sins already forgiven—and such remission is doubled because of the partial indulgence here granted.

3. A partial indulgence is granted to one of the faithful who, in a penitential spirit, of his own accord abstains from something permitted and pleasing to him.

By this concession one is urged to bring his body into subjection and into conformity with the poor and suffering Christ. This self-denial is more

excellent when united with charity—for instance, when what would have been spent on amusements and self-indulgence is given to the poor in one form or another.

In addition to these three general ways of gaining a partial indulgence, the *Enchiridion of Indulgences* lists many specific prayers and works of piety for which one may gain a partial indulgence. Some of the most common are the following:

- Acts of faith, hope, charity, and contrition, according to any good formula. Each act is indulgenced.
- A visit of adoration to the Blessed Sacrament.
- “We give Thee thanks, Almighty God, for all Thy benefits, Who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.”
- “Angel of God, my guardian dear, to whom God’s love commits me here, ever this day be at my side, to light and guard, to rule and guide.”
- Recitation of the *Angelus*. (In Paschal time, of the *Regina Caeli*).
- The *Anima Christi* (“Soul of Christ, sanctify me ...”).
- For visiting a cemetery and praying (even if only mentally) for the departed. (Applicable only to the souls in Purgatory).
- Spiritual Communion, according to any devout formula.
- Devout recitation of the Apostles’ Creed or the Nicene Creed.
- For teaching or studying Christian Doctrine.
- For reciting the *Prayer before a Crucifix* (“Behold, O kind and most sweet Jesus ...”) before an image of the Crucified after Holy Communion.
- Pious recitation of the Act of Reparation (“Most Sweet Jesus, whose overflowing charity for men is requited by so much forgetfulness ...”). (A plenary indulgence is granted if it is publicly recited on the feast of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus).
- Pious recitation of the Act of Dedication of the Human Race to Christ the King (“Most sweet Jesus Redeemer of the human race ...”). (A plenary indulgence is granted if it is publicly recited on the feast of Christ the King).
- For each of the following litanies: the Most Holy Name of Jesus, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Most Precious Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Joseph, and the Litany of the Saints.
- The *Magnificat* (“My soul doth magnify the Lord...”).
- The *Memorare* (“Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary ...”).
- For devoutly making use of an object of piety (crucifix, cross, Rosary, scapular, medal) properly blessed by any priest.
- For spending some time in devout mental prayer.
- “V. Let us pray for our Sovereign Pontiff, N.
- R. The Lord preserve him and give him life, and make him blessed upon the earth, and deliver him not up to the will of his enemies.”
- For devoutly and attentively being present at a sermon.
- “Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace.” (Applicable only to the souls in Purgatory).
- For recitation of the Rosary privately, outside a church or public oratory, etc. For this private recitation outside a church, the decades may be separated. Though one does not need to announce the mysteries, one should add meditation to the vocal recitation.

- For reading Sacred Scripture as spiritual reading, with the veneration and devotion due to the word of God.
- The *Salve Regina* (“Hail, Holy Queen ...”).
- For devoutly making the Sign of the Cross, saying the words: “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.”
- For the devout recitation of the *Tantum Ergo*
- (“Down in adoration falling ...”), including the versicle and response: V. “He gave them bread from Heaven.” R. “Containing in Itself all sweetness,” and the “Let Us Pray” prayer.
- “Come, Holy Ghost, fill the hearts of Thy faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of Thy love.”
- For renewing one’s baptismal vows, using any customary formula. (A plenary indulgence is granted if this is done in the celebration of the Paschal Vigil or on the anniversary of one’s Baptism).

(The complete list of all 70 specific ways to gain an indulgence, including both plenary and partial, is found in the Enchiridion on Indulgences.)

Appendix 2

The Brown Scapular

Promises Of The Scapular Of Our Lady Of Mount Carmel

(The following official information was obtained from the National Scapular Center, Darien, Illinois, May 9, 1986.)

Two wonderful promises of Our Lady are available to those who have been enrolled in the brown scapular. Enrollment is a simple procedure. (One should ask a priest to make this enrollment.)

The great promise of the Blessed Virgin Mary, given to St. Simon Stock on July 16, 1251, is as follows: *“Whoever dies wearing this scapular shall not suffer eternal fire.”*

Our Lady’s second Scapular Promise, known as the Sabbatine Privilege (the word “Sabbatine” meaning “Saturday”), was given by the Blessed Virgin Mary to Pope John XXII in the year 1322 and is as follows: *“I, the Mother of Grace, shall descend on the Saturday after their death, and whomsoever I shall find in Purgatory, I shall free.”*

There are three conditions for obtaining this privilege: 1) the wearing of the Scapular; 2) the practice of chastity according to one’s state of life;

3) the daily recitation of the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Those who cannot read can abstain from meat on Wednesdays and Saturdays instead of reciting the Little Office. Also, any priest who has diocesan faculties (this includes most priests) has the additional faculty to commute (change) the third requirement into another pious work—for example, the daily Rosary.

Because of the greatness of the Sabbatine privilege, the Carmelite Order suggests that the third requirement not be commuted into anything less than the daily recitation of seven Our Fathers, seven Hail Marys, and seven Glory Be to the Fathers.

Appendix 3

Prayers for the Poor Souls

(Pious recitation of the following prayers will greatly benefit the Poor Souls in Purgatory.)

A PRAYER FOR THE SOULS IN PURGATORY

O most gentle Heart of Jesus, ever present in the Blessed Sacrament, ever consumed with burning love for the poor captive souls in Purgatory, have mercy on the souls of Thy departed servants. Be not severe in Thy judgments, but let some drops of Thy Precious Blood fall upon the devouring flames. And do Thou, O Merciful Saviour, send Thy holy angels to conduct them to a place of refreshment, light and peace. Amen.

A PRAYER FOR THE DEAD

O God, the Creator and Redeemer of all the faithful, grant unto the souls of Thy departed servants full remission of all their sins, that through the help of our pious supplications they may obtain that pardon which they have always desired, Thou Who livest and reignest world without end. Amen.

V. Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord.

R. *And let perpetual light shine upon them.*

V. May they rest in peace, Amen. 413

R. And may the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

A PRAYER FOR OUR DEAR DEPARTED

O Good Jesus, Whose loving Heart was ever troubled by the sorrows of others, look with pity on the souls of our dear ones in Purgatory. O Thou Who didst “love Thine own,” hear our cry for mercy, and grant that those whom Thou hast called from our homes and hearts may soon enjoy everlasting rest in the home of Thy Love in Heaven. Amen.

V. Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord,

R. *And let perpetual light shine upon them. Amen.*

A PRAYER FOR DECEASED PARENTS

O God, who hast commanded us to honor our father and our mother, in Thy mercy have pity on the souls of my father and mother, and forgive them their trespasses, and make me to see them again in the joy of everlasting brightness. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

—*The Roman Missal*

A PRAYER TO JESUS AND MARY

O Most loving Jesus, I humbly beseech Thee that Thou wouldst Thyself offer to Thine eternal Father, on behalf of the Holy Souls in Purgatory, Thy Most Precious Blood, which poured forth from the Sacred Wounds of Thine adorable Body, together with Thine agony and death. And do thou likewise, O sorrowful Virgin Mary, present unto the Heavenly Father, together with the dolorous passion of thy dear Son, thine own sighs and tears, and all the sorrows thou didst suffer in His suffering, in order that, through the merits of the same, refreshment may be granted to the souls now suffering in the fiery torments of Purgatory, so that, being delivered from that painful prison, they may be clothed with glory in Heaven, there to sing the mercies of God for ever and ever. Amen.

Absolve, O Lord, the souls of all the faithful departed from every bond of sin, that by Thy gracious assistance they may deserve to escape the judgment of vengeance and enjoy the blessedness of everlasting light. Amen.

V. Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord.

R. *And let perpetual light shine upon them.*

V. From the gates of Hell,

R. *Deliver their souls, O Lord.*

V. May they rest in peace.

R. *Amen,*

V. O Lord, hear my prayer.

R. *And let my cry come unto Thee.*

Let Us Pray

O God, the Creator and Redeemer of all the faithful, grant unto the souls of Thy servants and handmaids the remission of all their sins, that through our devout supplications they may obtain the pardon they have always desired, Thou Who livest and reignest world without end. Amen.

Eternal rest, etc.

A PRAYER FOR THE POOR SOULS

My Jesus, by the sorrows Thou didst suffer in Thine agony in the Garden, in Thy scourging and crowning with thorns, on the way to Calvary, and in Thy crucifixion and death, have mercy on the souls in Purgatory, and especially on those that are most forsaken; do Thou deliver them from the dire torments they endure; call them and admit them to Thy most sweet embrace in Paradise. Amen.

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory Be.

V. Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord,

R. *And let perpetual light shine upon them.*

V. May the divine assistance remain always with us.

R. *And may the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.*

DE PROFUNDIS—"OUT OF THE DEPTHS"

(A cry to God by the soul in distress, to be prayed for the Poor Souls.

Psalm 129.)

Out of the depths I have cried unto Thee, O Lord—Lord hear my voice! Let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication. If Thou, O Lord, shalt mark our iniquities, O Lord, who can abide it? For with Thee there is mercy, and by reason of Thy law I have waited for Thee, O Lord. My soul hath waited on His word; my soul hath hoped in the Lord.

From the morning watch even unto night, let Israel hope in the Lord. For with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plentiful redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all its iniquities.

V. Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord.

R. *And let perpetual light shine upon them.*

Let Us Pray

O God, the Creator and Redeemer of all the faithful, grant to the souls of Thy departed servants the full remission of all their sins, that through our pious supplications they may obtain that pardon which they have always

desired, Thou who livest and reignest world without end. Amen.

THE OFFERTORY PRAYER FOR THE POOR SOULS

O Lord Jesus Christ, King of glory, deliver the souls of all the faithful departed from the pains of Hell and from the deep pit; deliver them from the lion's mouth, that Hell may not swallow them up, and may they not fall into darkness; but may the holy standard-bearer Michael lead them into the holy Light which Thou didst promise to Abraham and to his seed of old. We offer to Thee, O Lord, sacrifices and prayers; do Thou receive them on behalf of those souls whom we commemorate this day. Grant them, O Lord, to pass from death to that Life which Thou didst promise to Abraham and to his seed of old.

—*The Roman Missal*

PRAYER FOR THE POOR SOULS FROM THE CANON OF THE MASS

Remember, O Lord, Thy servants and handmaids, N. and N., who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith and rest in the sleep of peace. To these, O Lord, and to all who rest in Christ, grant, we beseech Thee, a place of comfort, light, and peace. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

A PRAYER FOR A DECEASED PRIEST

O God, Thou didst raise Thy servant, N., to the sacred priesthood of Jesus Christ, according to the Order of Melchisedech, giving him the sublime power to offer the Eternal Sacrifice, to bring the Body and Blood of Thy Son Jesus Christ down upon the altar, and to absolve the sins of men in Thine own holy Name. We beseech Thee to reward his faithfulness and to forget his faults, admitting him speedily into Thy holy presence, there to enjoy forever the recompense of his labors. This we ask through Jesus Christ Thy Son our Lord. Amen.

A PRAYER FOR A DECEASED POPE

O God, in Thine all-wise providence Thou didst ordain that Thy servant, N., should rule the See of Peter, holding the supreme office of Vicar of Our Lord Jesus Christ and Pastor of the Universal Church. We beseech Thee to

reward his labors for Thy sheep and to deal mercifully with his faults, admitting him speedily into the company of the blessed, there to rejoice exceedingly in Thy holy presence and to enjoy forever the recompense of his holy labors. This we ask through Jesus Christ Thy Son our Lord. Amen.

A PRAYER TO THE POOR SOULS IN PURGATORY

O holy souls in Purgatory, thou art the certain heirs of Heaven. Thou art most dear to Jesus, as the trophies of His Precious Blood, and to Mary, Mother of Mercy. Obtain for me, through thine intercession, the grace to lead a holy life, to die a happy death, and to attain to the blessedness of eternity in Heaven.

Dear suffering souls, who long to be delivered in order to praise and glorify God in Heaven, by thine unfailing pity, help me in the needs which distress me at this time, particularly (*here mention your request*), so that I may obtain relief and assistance from God.

In gratitude for thine intercession, I offer to God on thy behalf the satisfactory merits of my prayers, works, joys and sufferings of this day (*week, month, or whatever space of time you wish to designate*). Amen.

A PRAYER OF SUPPLICATION TO THE POOR SOULS IN PURGATORY

O holy souls, as one truly devoted to thee I promise never to forget thee and continually to pray to the Most High for thy release. I beseech thee to respond to this offering which I make to thee, and to obtain for me from God, with Whom thou art so powerful on behalf of the living, that I may be freed from all dangers of soul and body.

I beg both for myself and for my relations and benefactors, friends and enemies, pardon for our sins and the grace of perseverance in good, whereby we may save our souls. Obtain for us peace of heart; assist us in all our actions; succor us promptly in all our spiritual and temporal needs; console and defend us in our dangers.

Pray for the Supreme Pontiff, for the exaltation of Holy Church, for peace between nations, for Christian rulers, and for tranquility among peoples; and grant that we may one day all rejoice together in Paradise. Amen.

A SHORT AND EFFICACIOUS PRAYER FOR THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

O most compassionate Jesus, have mercy on the souls detained in Purgatory, for whose redemption Thou didst take upon Thyself our nature and endure a bitter death. Mercifully hear their sighs, look with pity upon the tears which they now shed before Thee, and by virtue of Thy Passion, release them from the pains due to their sins. O most merciful Jesus, let Thy Precious Blood reach down into Purgatory and refresh and revive the captive souls who suffer there. Stretch out to them Thy strong right hand, and bring them forth into the place of refreshment, light and peace. Amen.

O blessed souls! We have prayed for thee! We entreat thee, who art so dear to God, and who art certain of never losing Him, to pray for us poor miserable sinners who are in danger of being damned and of losing God forever. Amen.

FOR OUR DECEASED SERVICEMEN

Thou art all-powerful, O God, and livest forever in light and joy. Look with pity and love, we beseech Thee, upon those men who have bravely fought and gallantly died for our country. By laying down their lives, they have showed supreme love for others. We implore Thee to accept their sacrifice and their belief in the justice of the cause for which they died. May their offering not be in vain. Deign to forgive any sins or misdeeds they may have committed. Bring them quickly, we implore Thee, into Thine august presence, where fear, sadness, mourning and death no longer exist. Have pity, in Thy loving kindness, on those they leave behind. In Thine own inscrutable ways, make good their absence, and lavishly bestow Thy love and consolations upon those deprived of their presence. This we ask of Thee in the name of Jesus Christ, Our King. Amen.

A PRAYER FOR THE SUFFERING SOULS

O Adorable Trinity, cast upon us Thy merciful glance. Look at these souls whom Thou hast created, and who suffer far from Thee an unutterable grief. Look at Thy poor contrite servants, humbly supplicating Thee in their behalf. For the sake of the glorious Virgin Mary, Mother of Jesus Christ, and our Mother also, deign to shorten the sufferings of these desolate souls; and

to us all who labor in the miseries of this life, grant the grace of eternal salvation.

I am only a sinner, but in obedience to Thy command, dear Jesus, I dare to intercede with Thee for my captive brethren. Deign by Thy Holy Sacrifice to appease the justice of Thy Father and open Heaven to those poor souls who languish far from Thee. Amen.

V. Grant unto them, O Lord, eternal rest;

R. *And let perpetual light shine upon them.*

V. May they rest in peace.

R. *Amen.*

PRAYER TO GOD THE FATHER

Eternal Father, I offer Thee the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ in satisfaction for my sins, in supplication for the Holy Souls in Purgatory and for the needs of the Holy Church. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE SOULS IN PURGATORY

O Almighty God, with Whom live the souls of the perfect, and in Whose holy keeping are placed the souls of those that depart hence in an inferior degree of Thy grace—they being, by their imperfect character, unworthy of Thy presence and therefore detained in a state of grief and suspended hopes—as we bless Thee for the saints already admitted to Thy glory, so we humbly offer our prayers for Thine afflicted servants, who continually wait and sigh for the day of their deliverance. Pardon their sins, supply their want of preparation, and wipe away the tears from their eyes, that they may see Thee, and in Thy glorious sight rejoice eternally, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

REQUIESCANT

V. Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord.

R. *And let perpetual light shine upon them.*

V. May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

R. *Amen.*

A NOVENA FOR THE POOR SOULS (*Prayers from The Raccolta*,

594595)

SUNDAY

O Lord God Almighty, I beseech Thee by the Precious Blood which Thy divine Son Jesus shed in the Garden, deliver the souls in Purgatory, and especially that one which is the most forsaken of all, and bring it into Thy glory, where it may praise and bless Thee forever. Amen.

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory Be.

Eternal rest, etc.

MONDAY

O Lord God Almighty, I beseech Thee by the Precious Blood which Thy divine Son Jesus shed in His cruel scourging, deliver the souls in Purgatory, and among them all, especially that soul which is nearest to its entrance into Thy glory, that it may soon begin to praise Thee and bless Thee forever. Amen.

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory Be.

Eternal rest, etc.

TUESDAY

O Lord God Almighty, I beseech Thee by the Precious Blood of Thy divine Son Jesus that was shed in His bitter crowning with thorns, deliver the souls in Purgatory, and among them all, particularly that soul which is in the greatest need of our prayers, in order that it may not long be delayed in praising Thee in Thy glory and blessing Thee forever. Amen.

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory Be.

Eternal rest, etc.

WEDNESDAY

O Lord God Almighty, I beseech Thee by the Precious Blood of Thy divine Son Jesus that was shed in the streets of Jerusalem, whilst He carried on His sacred shoulders the heavy burden of the Cross, deliver the souls in Purgatory, and especially that one which is richest in merits in Thy sight, so that, having soon attained the high place in glory to which it is destined, it

may praise Thee triumphantly and bless Thee forever. Amen.

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory Be.

Eternal rest, etc.

THURSDAY

O Lord God Almighty, I beseech Thee by the Precious Body and Blood of Thy divine Son Jesus, which He Himself, on the night before His Passion, gave as meat and drink to His beloved Apostles and bequeathed to His holy Church to be the perpetual Sacrifice and life-giving nourishment of His faithful people, deliver the souls in Purgatory, but most of all, that soul which was most devoted to this Mystery of infinite love, in order that it may praise Thee therefore, together with Thy divine Son and the Holy Spirit in Thy glory forever. Amen.

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory Be.

Eternal rest, etc.

FRIDAY

O Lord God Almighty, I beseech Thee by the Precious Blood which Jesus Thy divine Son did shed this day upon the tree of the Cross, especially from His sacred hands and feet, deliver the souls in Purgatory, and particularly that soul for whom I am most bound to pray, in order that I may not be the cause which hinders Thee from admitting it quickly to the possession of Thy glory, where it may praise Thee and bless Thee for evermore. Amen.

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory Be.

Eternal rest, etc.

SATURDAY

O Lord God Almighty, I beseech Thee by the Precious Blood which gushed forth from the sacred side of Thy divine Son Jesus in the presence of and to the great sorrow of His most holy Mother, deliver the souls in Purgatory, and among them all, especially that soul which has been most devout to this noble Lady, that it may come quickly into Thy glory, there to praise Thee in her, and her in Thee, through all the ages. Amen.

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory Be.

Eternal rest, etc.

ON EVERY DAY OF THE NOVENA

V. O Lord, hear my prayer;

R. *And let my cry come unto Thee.*

O God, the Creator and Redeemer of all the faithful, grant unto the souls of Thy servants and handmaids the remission of all their sins, that through our devout supplications they may obtain the pardon they have always desired, Who livest and reignest world without end. Amen.

Eternal rest, etc.

PRAYER OF ST. GERTRUDE THE GREAT

O Eternal Father, I offer Thee the Most Precious Blood of Thy Divine Son, Jesus, in union with the Masses said throughout the world today, for all the holy souls in Purgatory and for sinners every-where—for sinners in the Universal Church, for those in my own home and for those within my family. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE DYING

O Most Merciful Jesus, lover of souls, I pray Thee, by the agony of Thy most Sacred Heart, and by the sorrows of Thine Immaculate Mother, to wash in Thy Most Precious Blood the sinners of the whole world who are now in their agony and who will die today.

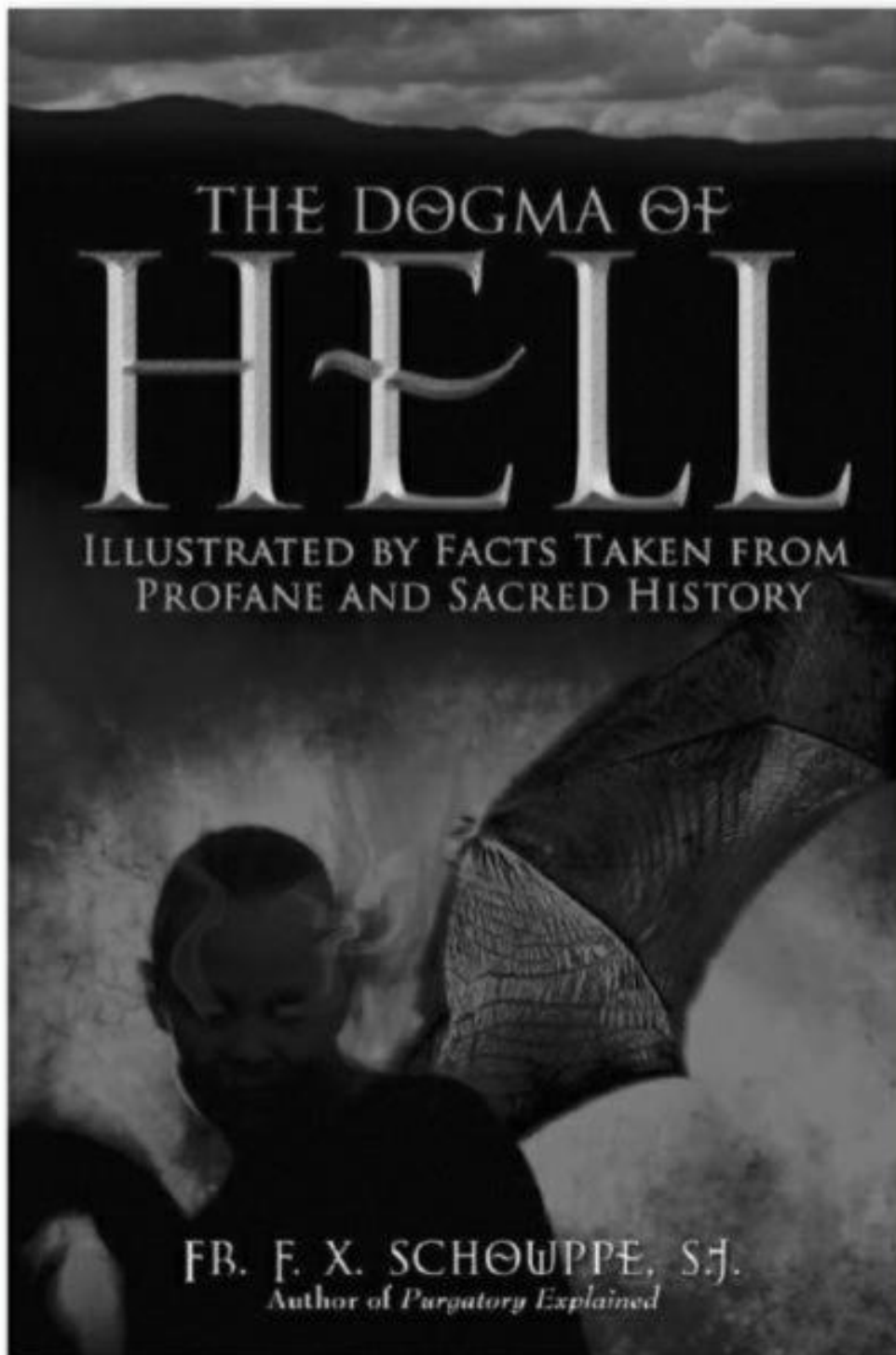
Heart of Jesus, once in agony, have mercy on the dying! Amen.

O Mother most merciful, pray for the souls in Purgatory!

Dogma of Hell

Fr. F.X. Schouppe

No. 2306 ISBN: 978-0-89555-900-5



The Dogma of Hell explores the basic Catholic doctrine on Hell, purposefully awakening in the reader a profound realization of its reality and

eternity of horrors. Eminent French theologian Fr F X Schouppe, SJ, author of *Purgatory Explained by the Lives and Legends of the Saints*, has written here a similar but much smaller book.

In short chapters, he has recounted numerous true stories, apparitions of the damned, and complete Catholic teaching on Hell. He clearly shows that for those who are not motivated to do good out of love of God, the fear of Hell is a legitimate and often salutary motive for avoiding sin.

Although the subject matter is frightening, the ultimate purpose of this book is not to frighten souls, but to help them avoid damnation by reminding them of the pain and suffering in an eternity spent in the absence of God.

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St. Catherine & Don Cattaneo Marabotto
No. 0228 ISBN: 978-0-89555-335-5

The SPIRITUAL
DOCTRINE *of*
Saint
Catherine
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SAINT CATHERINE
OF GENOA, 1447–1510,
AND DON CATTENEO
MARABOTTO,
HER CONFESSOR



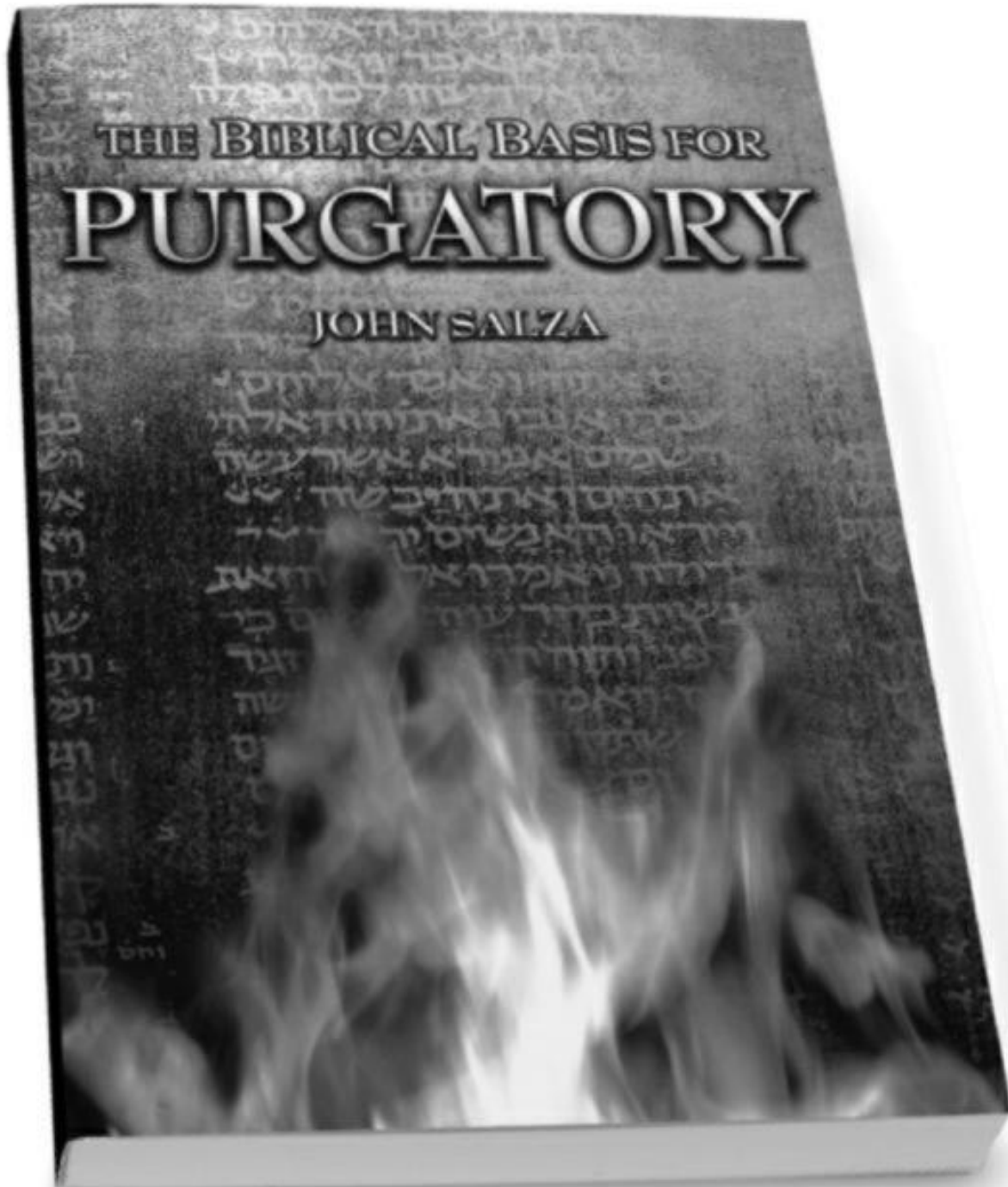
This great lay mystic reveals that the Gates of Heaven are actually wide open; but that souls choose not to go there unless they are perfect. If they are wicked (in mortal sin); they hurl themselves into Hell. If they die in the State of Grace; but with sins yet unexpiated; they hasten to the appropriate place in Purgatory. St. Catherine says that the sins we expiate in this life are paid for at a very small price indeed compared to what we will pay in Purgatory. A classic!

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John Salza

No. SB0103 ISBN: 978-1-93530-217-9



Jesus taught us about it, and for centuries the Church has faithfully defined and defended it. Protestants deny it even exists, while many Catholics fundamentally misunderstand it. It is Purgatory: that place of purifying penance where souls saved by Christ are made perfect and acceptable to spend life eternal in heaven.

In *The Biblical Basis For Purgatory*, author and apologist John Salza (*Why Catholics Cannot Be Masons*) offers the definitive scriptural explanation of this distinctively Catholic doctrine. Building on the teachings of Christ and St. Paul, he shows how the existence of a place of temporal punishment after death is not only a logical extension of what we know about the reality of sin and God' s justice, but is also a supreme expression of God's love and mercy.

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For The
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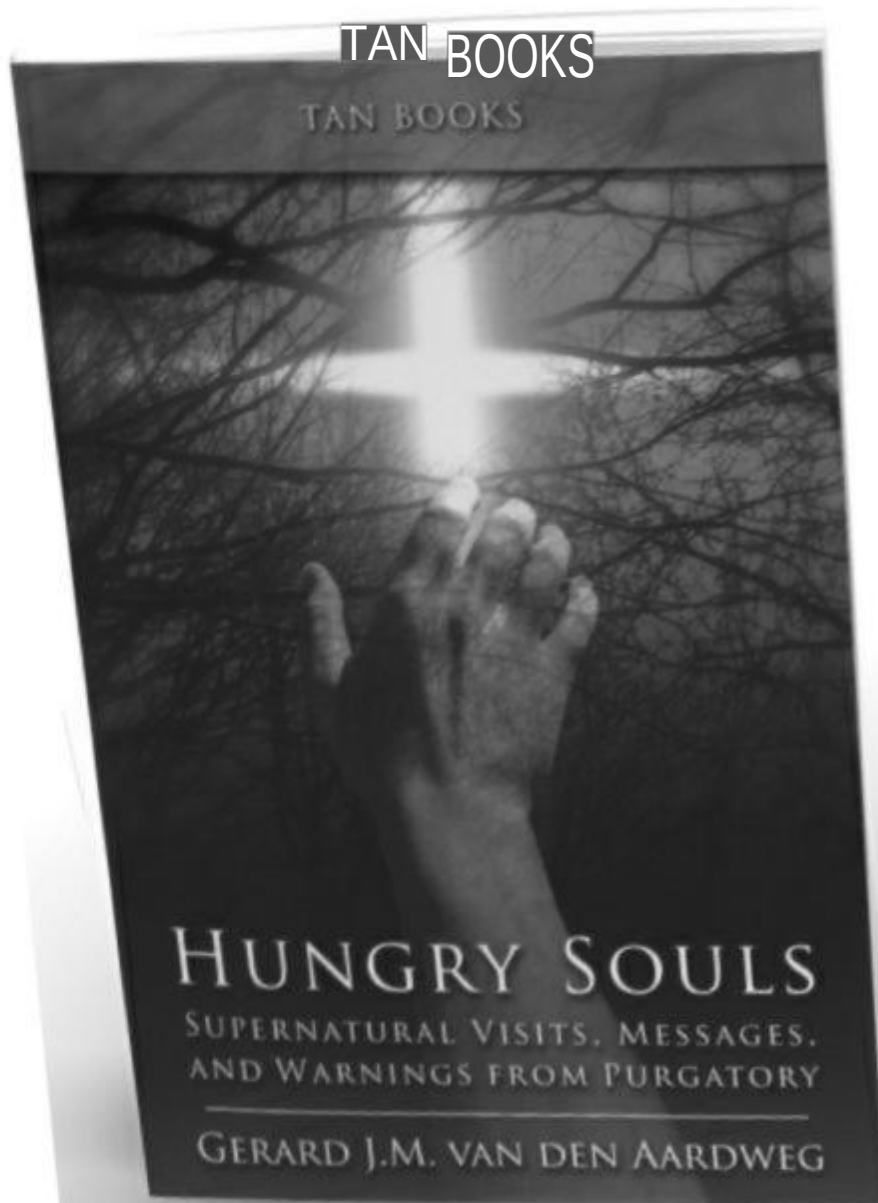
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PURGATORY?

By Pr. P. X- Schouppé, S.J

Explained by the lives and legends of the Saints

It is a fact of divine revelation that the soul of every person who dies in the state of grace, but without having made sufficient expiation on earth for his forgiven sins, will undergo the punishment and purification of Purgatory before entering Heaven. In this fascinating book, Father Schouppé presents the ancient Catholic tradition on Purgatory, explaining how its pains are excruciating—greater than any suffering known on earth, how they are adapted to the past sins of each individual soul, how they can vary in duration from less than one minute to a period of several centuries, and how they manifest the infinite mercy of God no less than His justice. On many occasions God has allowed souls in Purgatory to appear on earth to plead for prayers, sacrifices, and Masses for their relief; in *Purgatory Explained* the reader will find scores of true stories of apparitions and revelations on Purgatory taken from the lives of St. Margaret Mary, St. Teresa of Avila, St. Bridget of Sweden, St. Gertrude the Great, St. Francis de Sales, St. Catherine of Genoa, St. Magdalen de Pazzi, St. Lidwina of Schiedam, St. Margaret of Cortona, St. Thomas Aquinas, and the Cure of Ars. These amazing revelations all emphasize the wonderful relief which the souls in Purgatory receive from prayers, penance, almsgiving, and especially from the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass offered for them. Moreover, these stories describe the measureless gratitude of the souls in Purgatory, and the priceless benefits which they obtain for their benefactors in return.

Purgatory Explained is a book which goes to the very heart of the Faith and should be read by every Catholic—by everyone who has deceased relatives or friends, by everyone who has sins to make up for, and by everyone who wants to make a spiritual investment that will return to him a hundredfold.

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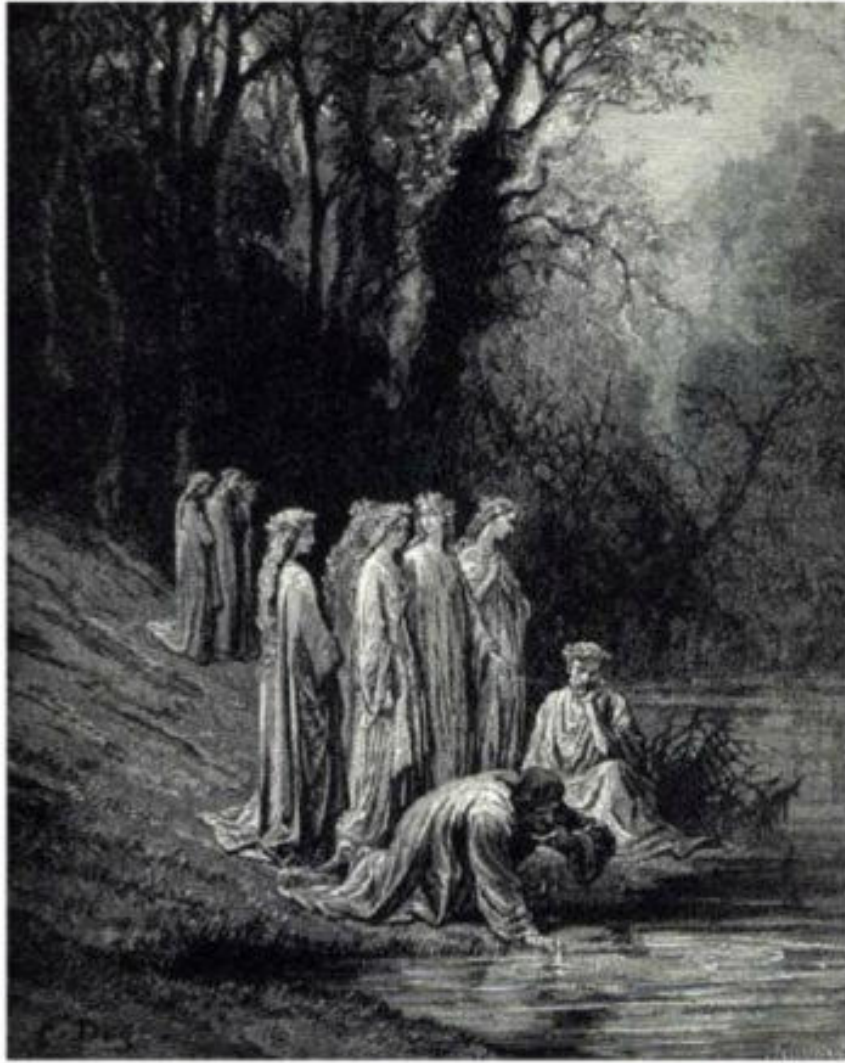
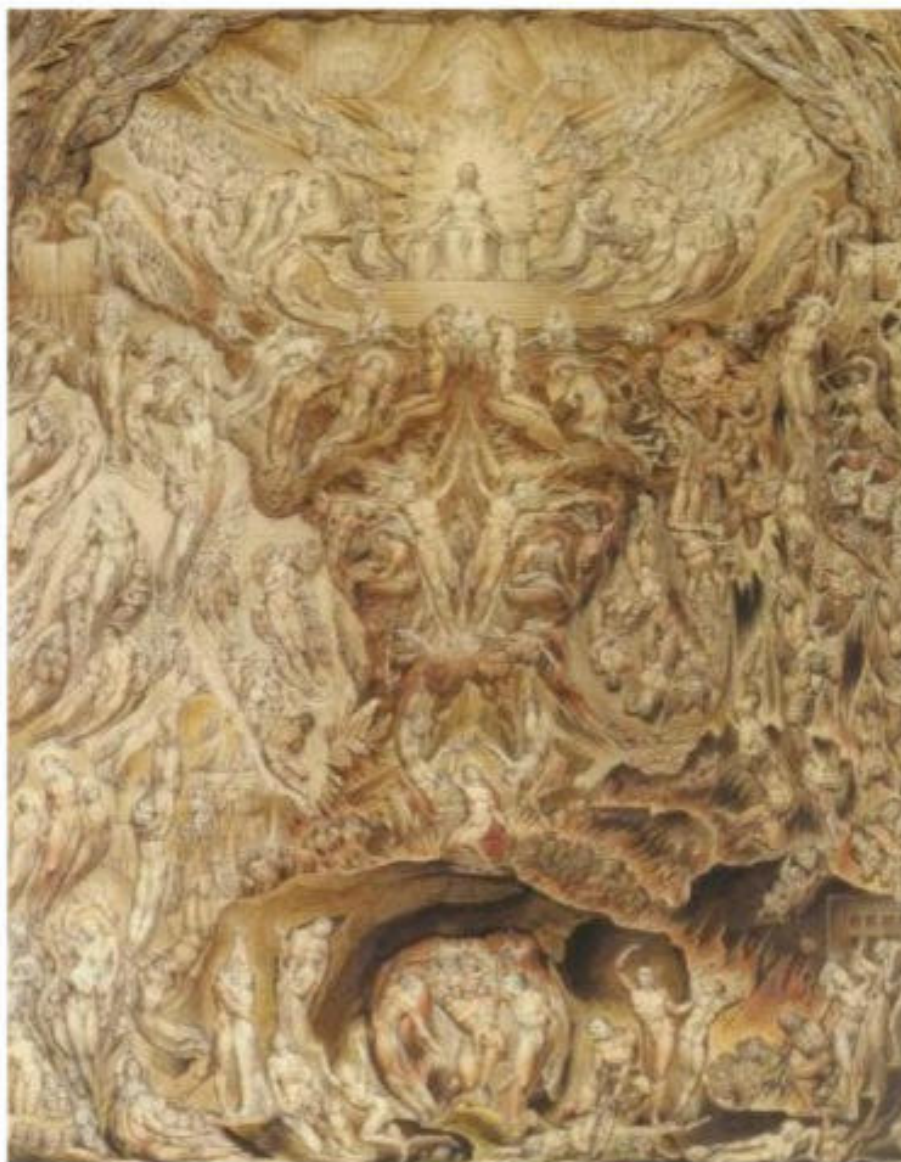


Illustration to Dante's Divine Comedy,
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Saint Alphonsus Liguori

WHAT WILL
HELL
BELIKE?

Edited by J. Schaefer

WHAT WILL HELL BE LIKE?

by

St. Alphonsus Liguori

Compiled and edited by
J. Schaefer

*‘And if thy hand scandalize thee, cutt it off; it is better for thee to enter into life, maimed, than having **tw** handt to go into hell, into unqnenchable fire; Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished* —Mark 9:42-43*

TAN Books

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“And I saw a great white throne, and one sitting upon it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away, and there was no place found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing in the presence of the throne, and the books were opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books, according to their works ... And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the pool of fire.”

—Apocalypse 20:11–12, 15

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What Will Hell Be Like?

THOUGH many of the pagans were true atheists, considering Hell a fable invented to frighten the wicked, the more renowned of the ancient philosophers such as Socrates, Xenophon, Aristotle, Plato and others had no difficulty in admitting the existence of a future life—a Heaven where the good would be rewarded, and a Hell where the evil are to be punished. Only the most perverted of men will deny that there is a God, the Creator and Governor of all things. Such men would prefer to deny the existence of God than to face the just chastisement of their own misdeeds.



The Inferno, Canto 34, by Gustave Dore

We Expect Reward or Punishment

On the one hand, men know perfectly well that God is a just rewarder of good, and at the same time they behold in the world countless wicked men who live in the midst of prosperity, while many of the virtuous live out their lives in the midst of affliction and misfortune. Hence, most people are convinced that after this mortal life, there exists another world in which vice is to be chastised and virtue rewarded as it deserves.

Teaching of Pagan Philosophers

The most famous of the pagan philosophers did not hesitate to teach that there exists in the other life a Heaven and a Hell. Xenophon and Socrates, for instance, remarked that, "Rewards are in store for those who please God, and punishments for those who displease Him." The same sentiments are expressed by Plato, Plutarch and others. While I refrain from quoting passages from these philosophers, I cannot pass over in silence two beautiful passages of the great orator, Cicero. In the first, he exclaims: "I wish to have no part with those who have recently begun to teach that souls die along with bodies, and that all is destroyed by death. Of far more weight with me is the authority of the ancient philosophers and of our own ancestors. They paid religious homage to the dead, and considered that their entrance into Heaven should be made easy for every good and just man." The second passage is even more to the point: "Those souls, which have been soiled by the vices of this life, will take the false road which separates them from the company of the gods; on the other hand, those who have preserved themselves pure and chaste, will find easy admittance to the divinity, the source of their existence."

Belief of Pagans

Among the fables of pagan peoples, there are numerous tales which, though they are fictitious, nevertheless attest to the belief of these people in the existence of a place of punishment in the future life. For us Christians, however, this belief of ancient pagans, and their philosophers, is but a substantiating argument. For we have the word of God Himself, attesting to the existence of Hell in countless passages of Sacred Scripture.

Where Is Hell Located?

The question as to the place where Hell is situated has been a matter of conjecture among the Fathers of the Church and theologians. St. John Chrysostom, for instance, was of the opinion that it is situated outside the bounds of this universe. More commonly and with more reason, other theologians think that Hell is situated within the earth itself. Some have even gone so far as to declare that it is near the surface of the globe, basing their opinion, rather quaintly, upon the existence of many volcanic mountains such as Vesuvius, the Volcanic Isles, Mt. Etna and others.

Catholic Teaching

Aside from these debatable opinions, a group of heretics known as the Ubiquitists maintained that Hell is not restricted to any determined place, but is to be found everywhere, since God has not destined any special place for the damned. This opinion, however, is evidently false, and contrary to the common belief of the Catholic Church which teaches us that God has established a definite place for the demons and the reprobate, as is evident from several texts of Sacred Scripture. St. Jerome deduces this specifically from a passage in the book of Numbers (*Num.* 16:31³³). Here is described the fate of Dathan and Abiron who were precipitated into Hell, falling into a chasm which opened under their very feet. At the same time a great flame burst from the earth and killed two hundred and fifty men who were accomplices in their sin. Moreover, in many passages of Sacred Scripture, the word “descend” is used in reference to Hell, indicating that Hell is situated in the bowels of the earth.

Hell Is a Definite Place

This assertion is confirmed by a passage of St. Luke (16:22): “But the rich man also died and was buried in hell.” The sacred text employs the word “buried,” because burials are made within the earth. Moreover, the rich man himself describes Hell as a “place of torment” (Lk. 16:28), confirming the opinion that Hell is a determined and definite place. In another place it is called a “lake”; “Thou hast saved me from those descending into the lake” (Ps. 29:3); and elsewhere, a pool: “And the devil who deceived them was cast into the pool of fire and brimstone.” (Apoc. 20:9). It is evident, therefore, that Hell is a determined place, and most probably situated within the earth. But as to where, precisely, it is situated, whether at the very center of the earth or nearer to the surface, cannot be determined from any revealed document. St. Thomas also declared that the dimensions of Hell, which will be the dwelling place of the damned after the resurrection, cannot be determined.



The Inferno, Canto 34, by Gustave Dore

Pains of Hell

Let us now treat of the pains of Hell, and first of all, of that of sense. St. Thomas proves that the fire of Hell is a corporeal and material fire, though for the most part he does not write of the fire which torments the souls separated from their bodies, but of that which the damned are to endure after their corporeal resurrection. Many heretics have maintained that the fire of Hell is not material, but only metaphorical or imaginary fire. There are numerous texts in Sacred Scripture, however, which demonstrate that the fire of Hell is a true, material and corporeal fire. We read, for instance, in the book of Deuteronomy: “A fire is kindled in my wrath, and shall burn even to the lowest hell.” (*Deut.* 32:22). And in the book of Job: “A fire that is not kindled shall devour him” (*Job* 20:26), revealing that this fire of Hell needs

not to be nourished, but, once enkindled by God, burns eternally. There are a number of passages in the book of Isaias referring to this fire of Hell: “Which of you can dwell with devouring fire? which of you shall dwell with everlasting burnings?” (33:14); “Their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be a loathsome sight to all flesh.” (66:24). “He will give fire, and worms into their flesh, that they may burn, and may feel forever.” (*Judith* 16:21).

Fire of Hell

In the parable of the Gospel, the rich man buried in Hell cries out to Lazarus, “I am tormented in this flame.” (*Lk.* 16:24). He says, “in this flame,” to show that the fire of Hell is a fire of a particular type, a fire prepared expressly to avenge the injuries which sin has done to God by carnal pleasures. For, *as* the book of Ecclesiasticus remarks, “the vengeance on the flesh of the ungodly is fire and worms.” (*Eccl.* 7:19). Hence, St. Thomas argues that this fire will be the instrument of the avenging justice of Almighty God.

Can a Spiritual Soul Feel Fire?

But here a difficulty is posed: how is it possible for corporeal fire to torment the spiritual soul? In answer to this question, we can only say that we know that it can be done. Perhaps the answer lies in this explanation of many theologians. The material fire of Hell will be given an extraordinary power by God, whereby it will be able to bind the spiritual soul to its place of torment, thus causing the soul untold humiliation and pain.

Punishment by Cold

In this same fire, St. Thomas remarks, the bodies of the damned, in addition to the intense heat, will endure bitter cold, passing from one to the other, without knowing a moment of relief. Thus do Scripture scholars explain the passage of the book of Job: “Let him pass from the snow water to excessive heat, and his sin even to hell.” (*Job* 24:19). Hence, St. Jerome says, the damned in Hell endure all their torments in this one fire.

Remorse of Conscience

In addition to their sufferings from the heat and cold of the fire of Hell, Sacred Scripture enumerates a number of other torments which will afflict the damned. One of these is the “worm,” to which the Scriptures refer frequently. Some commentators have explained this “worm” as a material thing, which will feed upon, without consuming, the flesh of the damned. But most theologians explain it metaphorically as the remorse of conscience which will afflict the damned in the fire and darkness of Hell. Forever will they have imprinted on their memories the results of their sins; forever will they repeat the words ascribed to them in the book of Wisdom: “We have erred from the way of truth, we wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and destruction and have walked through hard ways. What hath pride profited us? or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us? ... Such things as these the sinners said in hell.” (*Wis. 5:614*).

Suffering from Devils and Darkness

Added to their own remorse of conscience, the damned will also be tormented by the reproaches of the demons. This will be one of the most cruel punishments of the damned: the devils, who are their enemies, will continually mock them and remind them of their sins. Nor will the sufferings of the bodies of the damned cease here. They will also be afflicted by the terrible darkness of Hell, described by the holy man, Job: “Before I go, and return no more, to a land that is dark and covered with the mist of death: a land of misery and darkness, where the shadow of death, and no order, but everlasting horror dwelleth.” (*Job* 10:22).

Pain of Loss of God

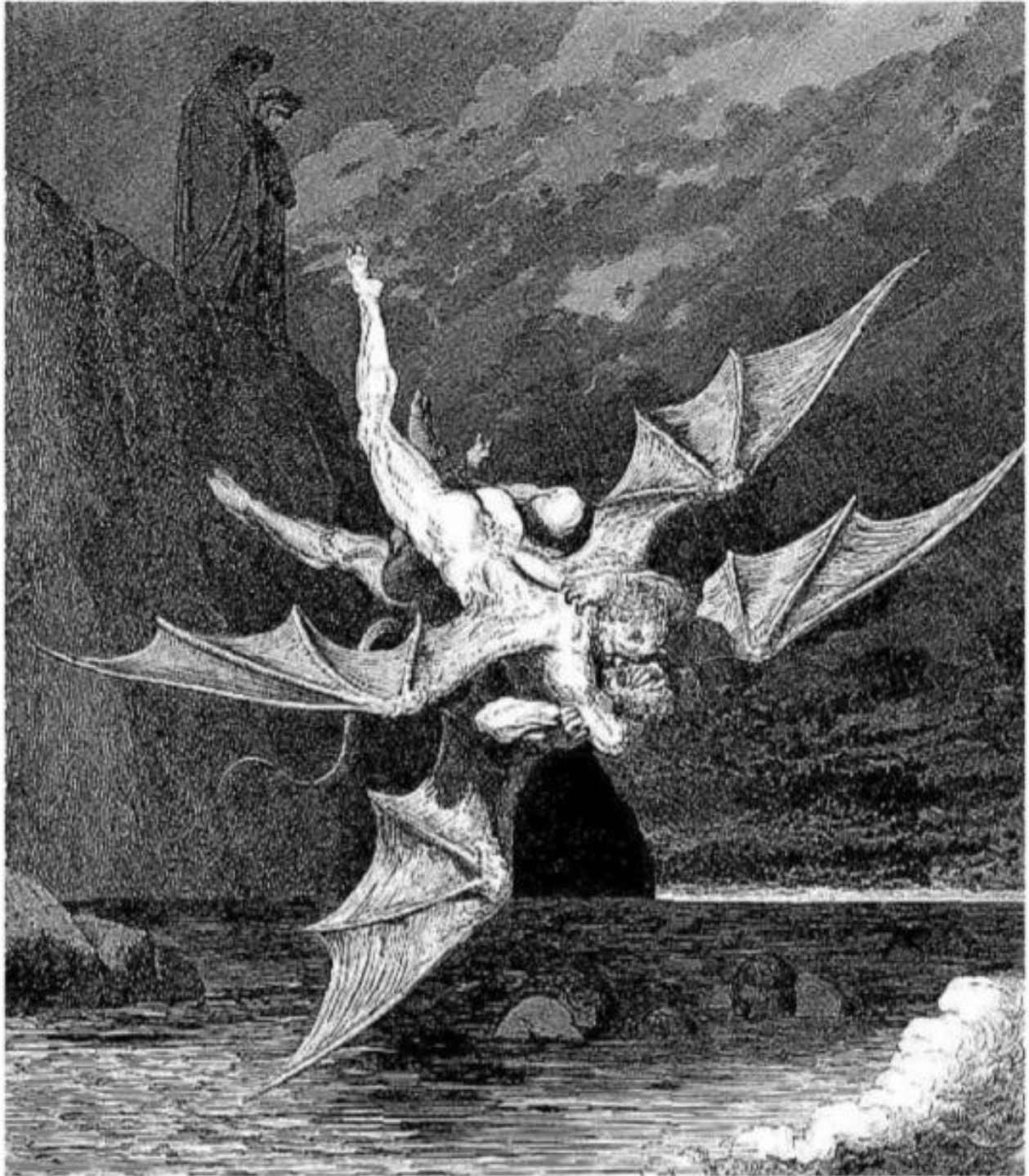
A certain author has written, but with little foundation, that the pain of loss is the same for all the reprobate. But it seems far more probable to me and to the majority of theologians that, though the damned are equally deprived of God, this pain will, nevertheless, afflict each according to the measure of his faults and the knowledge he will have in Hell of the God whom he has lost. For it is difficult to believe that one who has lost God by one mortal sin will be tormented in the same degree as one who has lost Him by a hundred sins. It is equally inconceivable to me, for instance, how one who has been in the state of sin for but one day, can be called upon to bear the same degree of punishment as he who has remained in this state for a whole year. For just as he who has loved God more ardently during his life, will enjoy Him more in Heaven, because of the knowledge of the immense good which he will then possess, so also will the damned, who has deprived himself of his God, be more severely tormented in realizing more deeply the great good which he has lost.

Teaching of St. Thomas

St. Thomas describes for us perfectly in what will consist the happiness of the elect and the torment of the reprobate. Insofar as his intellect is concerned, the Saint remarks, man will find complete joy in the vision of God; but, insofar as his affections are concerned, he will find complete satisfaction in the permanent union of his will with the infinite goodness of God. On the other hand, the torment of the damned will consist in being deprived of all divine light in his intellect, and in finding his affections obstinately turned away from the Divine Goodness. Elsewhere the saintly Doctor teaches that, though the punishment of the fire will be more terrifying, this separation from God is, however, a greater torment than that of the fire.

God Makes Heaven

In short, it is God who will be our paradise, for He embraces all goods in Himself, as He Himself once declared to Moses: “I will show thee all good.” (*Ex.* 33:19). Such was also the promise which He made to Abraham because of his merits: “Fear not, Abram, I am thy protector, and thy reward exceedingly great.” (*Gen.* 15:1). And what greater reward can He promise than Himself, who is the one good embracing all other goods?



Alichino & Calcabrina, by Gustave Dore

God Makes Hell

It is also God who will make Hell, for, as St. Bernard remarks, He Himself will be the chastisement of the damned. For just as the elect will be supremely happy because God is for him, and he is for God, so also will the reprobate be unhappy, because God is no longer for him, and he is no longer for God. Let us listen to the threat which God made against those who refused to belong to Him during this life: "Call his name, Not my people"; for you are not my people, and I will not be yours." (*Osee 1:9*). It is in this, then, that the torment of the damned will consist; it consists in the first sentence which Jesus Christ will pronounce over His enemies: "Depart from me into everlasting fire." This eternal separation will constitute Hell for the damned.

Eternal Choice Is Made During Life

For the present, sinners, blinded by the apparent goods of this earth, choose to live far from God and to turn their backs upon Him. And should God, who cannot dwell with sin, wish to enter into their hearts by expelling sin from them, they are not ashamed to repel Him, exclaiming: “Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.” (*Job* 21:14). Depart from us, we do not wish to follow Your ways, but our own, our passions, our pleasures. The great multitude of those, says Sacred Scripture, “who sleep in the dust of the earth, shall awake; some unto life everlasting, and others unto reproach, to see it always?” (*Dan.* 12:2). Yes, these unfortunates now sleep in the dust of their blindness; but, in the other life, unfortunately for them, they will awaken and realize the immense good which they have lost in voluntarily losing God.

Greatest Pain of Hell

The sword which shall pierce them with the greatest sorrow will be the thought of having lost God, and of having lost Him through their own fault. Unfortunates that they are! They now seek to lose sight of God, but once fallen into Hell, they will no longer be able to cease thinking of Him, and in this will their chastisement consist.

St. Augustine says that in Hell, the damned will be forced to think of nothing but God, and that will cause them terrible torment. And St. Bonaventure, expressing the same sentiments, says that no thought will torment the damned more than the thought of God. The Lord will grant to them such a vivid knowledge of their offended God, His goodness so unworthily spurned, and consequently, of the chastisement which their crimes have merited, that this knowledge will cause them a suffering greater than that of all the other punishments of Hell.

We read in the book of Ezechiel: “Over the heads of the living creatures was the likeness of the firmament, as the appearance of crystal terrible to behold, and stretched out over their heads above.” (1:22). Explaining these words, one author says that the damned will have continually before their eyes a terrible crystal or mirror: with the assistance of some fatal light, they will behold, on one hand, the immense good which they have lost in voluntarily losing divine grace, and, on the other, they will view the justly wrathful face of God; and this torment will surpass by a million times all the other punishments of Hell.

On this same subject, the author Cajetan makes the following reflection upon the words of David: “The wicked shall be turned into hell, all the nations that forget God.” (Ps. 9:18). The Prophet, says this author, does not here speak of a change of heart, or conversion, but of the spirit of sinners. For just *as* sinners do not wish to think of God during this life, that they might not be forced to renounce their passions, they will be forced—despite themselves and by a just chastisement—to think continuously of God in Hell. They would wish to shut out all remembrance of God from their minds, but they will be forced to think always of Him, thus recalling all the benefits which they have received from Him, as well *as* the offenses which they have committed against Him and by which they have been separated from Him for

all eternity.

The Damned Do Not Forget

Let us now consider briefly the condition of the intellect of the damned in Hell. St. Thomas says that the damned will be able to remember all the subjects of natural knowledge which they acquired here on earth, for this acquired knowledge will remain in their souls after death. This is evident from Sacred Scripture as well, from the response of Abraham to the rich man buried in Hell: “Son, remember that thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime.” (*Lk.* 16:25). This, then, is the conclusion of the Angelic Doctor: Just as in the elect there will be nothing that is not a subject of happiness to them, so also in the damned there will be nothing which will not be a subject of torment to them. Hence, the damned will preserve in their memories the things which they knew here on earth, not, it is true, for their consolation, but solely to increase their torment. Moreover, during this life the soul is frequently prevented from considering thoughts which would be disagreeable to it, because of corporeal sufferings and anxieties; but in Hell the soul will no longer be subject to this influence of the body. Hence, in Hell the soul will no longer be prevented from considering those things which can be a cause of torture to it. Likewise, in Hell the soul of a man will have constantly in its memory all the divine appeals made to it during life, as well as the number of sins which he committed, each of which will procure for him a new Hell.

The Damned Know Nothing About Us

Moreover, says Estius, just as God will procure the satisfaction of the blessed by making them know what concerns us, and especially that which concerns them in a special manner, such as our prayers addressed to them, on the other hand the damned will remain ignorant of all that concerns us, because they are complete strangers to the Church.



Devils and Virgil, by Gustave Dore

Do the Damned Have Faith?

It might be asked whether those Christians who possessed faith in this life, and who have not lost it by apostasy or heresy, will preserve it in Hell. St. Thomas responds in the negative, for in order to believe with a supernatural and theological faith, one must hold with a pious affection of the will to God the revealer. This pious affection, however, is a gift of God, of which He deprives them as well as the demons. They do, however, believe by a sort of natural faith, to which they are forced by the evidence of external signs, though this faith is not supernatural. It is in this sense that St. James has written that “The devils also believe and tremble” (*James 2:19*), signifying that their faith is forced and fearful.

Will the damned ever see or behold the glory of the Blessed? St. Thomas answers that at the Last Judgment the reprobate will see the blessed in their

glory, without being able to distinguish in what it consists, solely realizing that they are enjoying an inexplicable glory. This sight will afflict them with great sorrow, either because of a feeling of envy, or because of regret at having lost that which they themselves could have acquired. And for their eternal chastisement, this shadow of the beatific vision which they have beheld will remain imprinted in their memory forever.

The Will Is Set on Evil

Let us now discuss the condition of the will of the damned. St. Thomas remarks that the will of the damned, insofar *as* it is a natural faculty, cannot but be good, since it does not proceed from themselves but from God, who is the Author of nature; the damned have, however, vitiated it by their malice. But when we consider the will of the damned in its use, it cannot but be evil, for it is completely opposed to the will of God and obstinate in evil.

But whence does this obstinacy in evil proceed? Sylvius, in a very clear explanation, says that the obstinacy of the damned results from the nature itself of their state. For, since the damned now find themselves at the terminus of their existence and deprived of all divine assistance, God, by a just judgment, abandons them to the evil which they have voluntarily chosen and in which they have wished to end their life. It is natural for everything, once it has reached its terminus, to rest in it, unless it be moved by some external power. Now, the damned have terminated their lives with the depraved will in which they have died, and God has resolved to leave them to the evil which they have chosen. Just as the blessed can never possess an evil will, because they are always united to God, in like manner the damned can never turn their will to good, and consequently will always be unhappy, because they are obstinately and irrevocably opposed to the divine will.

Do the Damned Wish Evil to Others?

Because of this evil will of the damned, the question might be asked: ‘Do the damned wish that all men be damned?’ St. Thomas responds in the affirmative, because of the hatred which the reprobate bear to all men. But here a difficulty presents itself. As the number of the damned increases, the punishment of each individual is aggravated: how, then, can they desire an increase of torment for themselves? St. Thomas says that such is their hatred and envy that they would prefer to suffer more cruelly with many others than to suffer less alone. And it matters little to them that among those whose loss they desire are some whom they loved dearly during life. For the Holy Doctor remarks that all affection which is not based upon love of God vanishes easily; otherwise, the order of justice and right would be reversed in Hell.

Case of the Rich Man in Hell

If such be the case, then how can we explain the solicitude of the poor rich man in Hell, who besought Abraham to send Lazarus to his brothers on earth, to warn them to do penance lest they also be buried in Hell? St. Thomas explains that the envy of the damned is such that they would prefer to see all men lost, even their own parents; but since this is impossible, and, rooted as they are in self-love, they would rather see their parents delivered from Hell in preference to strangers, for they would be still more tormented by envy should they behold their own loved ones damned and others saved. This, then, is the reason for the concern of the rich man over the salvation of his brothers. The Angelic Doctor adds that this reprobate desired to see his brothers escape Hell, lest his own punishment be aggravated by their damnation, for by his bad example he had given occasion for their damnation.

Do the Damned Repent of Sin?

It might also be asked whether the damned repent of their sins. St. Thomas answers that a man can repent of his faults in two ways: directly or indirectly. He can repent directly insofar as he repents by a sentiment of hatred for the sin committed; in this sense, the damned cannot repent of his sin, for since he finds himself confirmed in his perverse will, he loves the malice of his fault. But he can repent indirectly, insofar as he detests his punishment, of which his sin is the cause. Thus the damned will their sin, insofar as its malice is concerned, but detest its punishment, which, nevertheless, can never cease because their sin endures forever.

Hatred of God

Do the damned hate God? St. Thomas says that God, considered in Himself, is the Supreme Good, and therefore cannot be an object of hatred for any reasonable creature. But He can become such to the damned in two ways: first, as the Author of their punishments, by which He is bound to afflict them; second, because they are obstinate in evil, while He is the infinite Good, they would hate God with their whole heart, even though He punished them but little.



The Inferno, Canto 15, by Gustave Dore

Do the Damned Desire to Be Destroyed?

We ask, finally, whether the damned would prefer to be annihilated and deprived of existence, than to submit to the punishments which they endure. St. Thomas, considering the question in itself, answers in the negative for, as he says, a state of nonbeing is never desirable, for it implies a deprivation of all good. But if this annihilation be considered as an end of all punishment, St. Thomas says that, from this point of view, the state of nonexistence presents itself as a good. It is in this sense that Jesus Christ spoke this sentence of Judas: "It were better for him, if that man had not been born." (*Mt. 26:24*). St. John seems to say the same thing when speaking of the damned in the Apocalypse: "In those days men shall seek death and shall not find it: and they shall desire to die, and death shall fly from them." (*Rev. 9:6*). This will of the damned, however, is uncertain, for they wish to continue to

exist, that they might always hate God.

Punishment of Hell Is Eternal

These punishments of the reprobate, which we have been considering, will endure forever. This doctrine of the eternity of the punishments of Hell was first denied by Origen, and later by the Socinians and a large number of Protestants. Origen, however, was condemned by the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople, and in general, by all the Fathers of the Church.

This Punishment Is Not Unjust

Nor can the eternity of the punishments of the damned ever be qualified as unjust. For anyone who offends God by a mortal sin merits an infinite punishment for an offense which is infinite. Hence, however severe or long the punishment may be, it can never be proportionate to the offense which has been committed. For the majesty of God is infinite; hence, whoever sins mortally merits an infinite punishment. It therefore appears just that mortal sin be punished by an eternal punishment.



The Inferno, Canto 33, by Gustave Dore

How Punishment Is Measured

It is useless to object that it does not seem just to inflict an eternal punishment for a sin which endures but a moment. For St. Augustine remarks that punishment is not measured by the duration of a fault, but by its gravity. Even at the tribunals of justice here on earth, the penalty of death is imposed upon some crimes which are committed in an instant.

The Angelic Doctor adds that it is but just that the punishment should not cease as long as the fault does not cease. Now, a fault which remains eternally can be remitted only by the grace of God, which man cannot acquire after death. As we have seen above, the will of the damned is obstinate in evil. Hence, he continues to love his sin at the same time that he submits to its punishment. How, then, can God deliver him from his chastisement, while

he continues to love his fault? How can God pardon his sin, while the damned is hardened in his hatred for God, if at the same time the Lord offered him pardon and friendship, the damned refused both the one and the other?

Nor can it be objected, as some heretics do, that it is contrary to the goodness and mercy of God to behold one of His creatures suffer eternally from such terrible punishments in Hell. For, as St. Thomas remarks, God has given superabundant witness of His goodness and mercy toward men. Beholding all men lost by the sin of Adam and their own sins, what great goodness did He not manifest in descending from Heaven to earth to become man, in the endurance of a poor, humble and afflicted life, in pouring forth the very last drop of His Blood amid such terrible torments upon an infamous gibbet? What greater proof of His goodness could He have given to men than to leave to them His own Body and Blood in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, that they might there find nourishment for their souls, and that, through this means, they might preserve and increase their spiritual forces until death, after which, finding themselves more closely united to God, they might enter into Heaven, there to enjoy eternally the life of the blessed?

The Patience of God

Ah! Most certainly, on the day of judgment, the Lord will make known to the entire world how many mercies, how many lights, how much help He has dispensed to each man during his life! And the numerous ingrates, who, despite such favors, have merited such chastisements, with what patience did He not pursue them, with what love has He not begged them to repent? If, despite such favors, they still would not renounce their passions and earthly pleasures, wished to live and die separated from God, voluntarily abandoning themselves to their eternal ruin, how can it be said that God has not manifested His mercy and goodness towards them?

In lieu of declaring the punishments of Hell not to be eternal, some heretics have invented another opinion, maintaining that the punishments of Hell will be lessened after a time, or momentarily interrupted. But this opinion is expressly contrary to the Sacred Scriptures. Isaias, for instance speaking of the reprobate proclaims: “Their worm will not die, and their fire will not be extinguished.” (*Is. 66:24*). And in the sentence pronounced against them at the Last Judgment, Jesus Christ will say to them: “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.”

Jesus' Parable of Dives and Lazarus

“There was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen; and feasted sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, who lay at his gate, full of sores, desiring to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table, and no one did give him; moreover the dogs came, and licked his sores.

“And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. And the rich man also died: and he was buried in hell. And lifting up his eyes when he was in torments, he saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom: And he cried, and said: Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, to cool my tongue: for I am tormented in this flame. And Abraham said to him: Son, remember that thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime, and likewise Lazarus evil things, but now he is comforted; and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between us and you, there is fixed a great chaos: so that they who would pass from hence to you, cannot, nor from thence come hither.

“And he said: Then, father, I beseech thee, that thou wouldst send him to my father's house, for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torments. And Abraham said to him: They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. But he said: No, father Abraham: but if one went to them from the dead, they will do penance. And he said to him: If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe, if one rise again from the dead.” (*Lk. 16:19-31*).

Fatima Children's Vision of Hell

(NOTE: In 1917 Our Blessed Mother appeared six times at Fatima, Portugal to Lucia dos Santos and Jacinta and Francisco Marto, three small children. During the course of these six world famous apparitions—now approved by the Church as worthy of our devotion and propagation—the Blessed Virgin Mary made several startling statements and predictions, among them the outbreak of World War II if people did not change their lives. During the July 13 apparition, she allowed the children to see a vision of Hell. Following is Lucia's description of what they saw.)

At this point, Lucia was heard to say aloud: "Yes, she wants people to recite the Rosary. People must recite the Rosary." The Lady's face then grew very grave and she said: "Sacrifice yourselves for sinners and say often, especially when you make some sacrifice: 'O my Jesus, this is for love of You, for the conversion of sinners, and in reparation for the offences committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary.—At these words, she opened her hands on the three children once again and the light streaming from them seemed to penetrate the earth, and the children beheld a vision of Hell. Lucia cried out in terror, calling upon Our Lady. "We could see a vast sea of fire," she revealed many years later. "Plunged in the flames were demons and lost souls, as if they were red-hot coals, transparent and black or bronze-colored, in human form, which floated about in the conflagration, borne by the flames which issued from them, with clouds of smoke, falling on all sides as sparks fall in a great conflagration without weight or equilibrium, amid shrieks and groans of sorrow and despair that horrified us and caused us to tremble with fear. The devils could be distinguished by horrible and loathesome forms of animals, frightful and unknown, but transparent like black coals that have turned red-hot." Full of fear, the children raised their eyes beseechingly to the Lady, who said to them with unspeakable sadness and tenderness: "You have seen Hell where the souls of poor sinners go. In order to save them, God wishes to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart. If people do what I ask, many souls will be saved and there will be peace."

Lucia later stated that although the vision lasted "but an instant," she felt

they would have died of fear and terror if Our Lady had not already promised to take them to Heaven.



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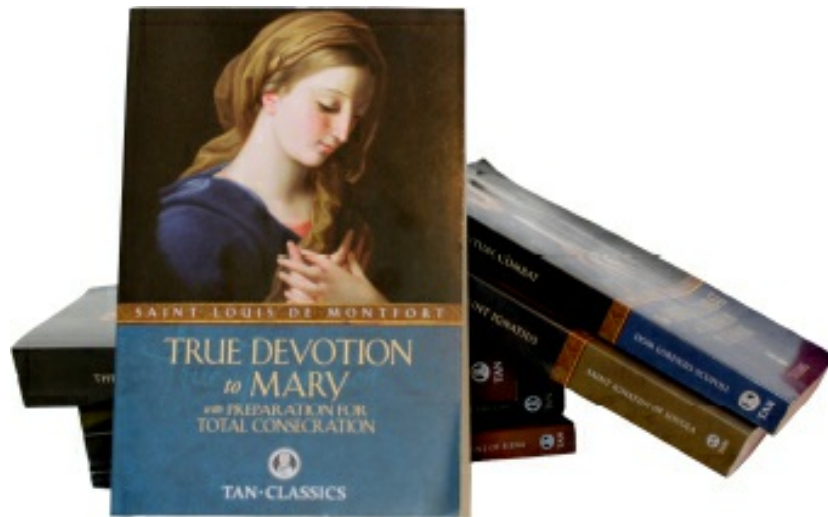
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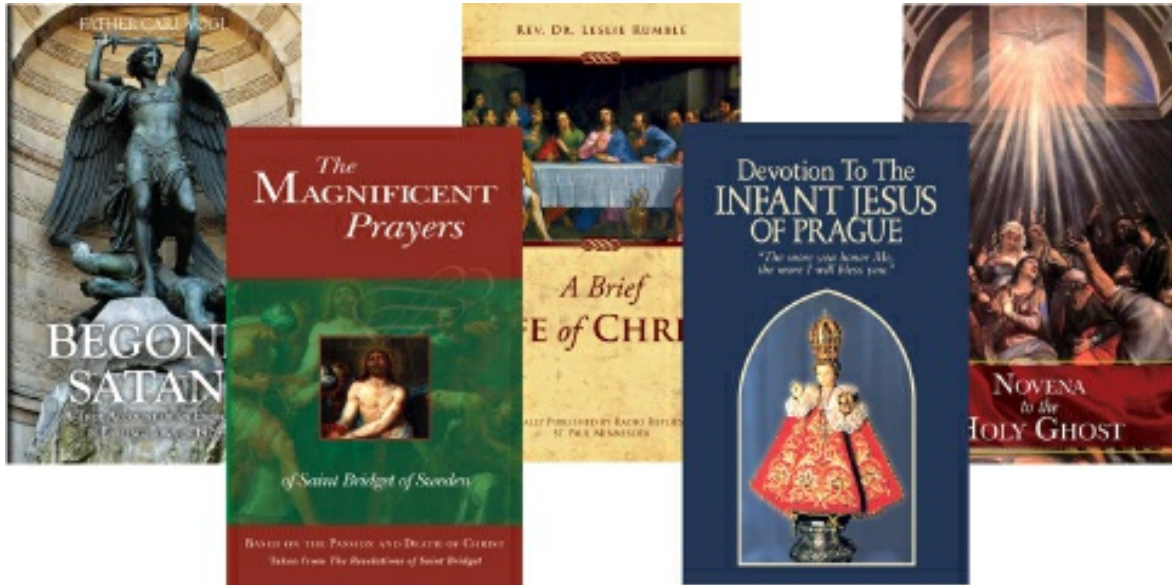
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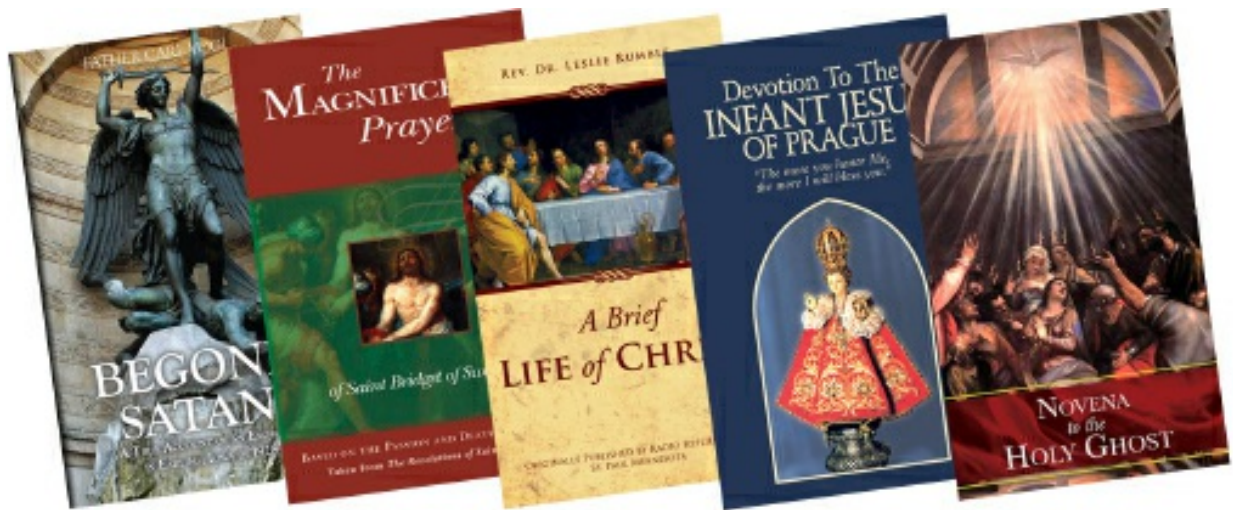
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JOHN SALZA



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John Salza

*To the Holy Souls in Purgatory:
“Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine,
et lux perpetua luceat eis.”*

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PREFACE

Last year, I was driving to work one rainy and foggy weekday morning. Traffic was moving along fairly well when, suddenly, cars began to stop. The stoppage was so abrupt that I had to brake quickly to avoid hitting the car in front of me. There was an accident up ahead.

And it wouldn't be the only accident that morning. As I stopped my car and glanced in the rear view mirror, I noticed the car directly behind me. It was going very fast. Too fast. Based on its speed and distance from my car, I knew that that car couldn't stop before hitting me. I was stuck. So I called out to God to protect us as I braced myself to be struck. And boom! That's what happened.

Fortunately, God answered my prayer and no one was injured. The driver got out of her car and ran over to my side window, apologizing profusely. She confessed that it was entirely her fault and asked me if I was hurt. She told me how guilty she felt and humbly begged for my forgiveness. Realizing that I had sustained no injuries, I assured her that I was fine. I also forgave her on the spot.

There was one minor problem, however. The impact dented the back bumper of my car. As we surveyed the damage caused by the accident, the driver quickly agreed to pay for the repairs. I asked for her driver's license and wrote down her contact information. Of course, if she'd refused to pay for the damage, I could have taken her to court and the judge would have ordered her to do so. Fortunately, this would be unnecessary. She paid for the repair and the issue completely resolved.

What does this story have to do with purgatory? Keep reading.

In this story, we see the following: Someone commits an offense, confesses her offense, and is forgiven. However, after she is forgiven, the damage caused by her actions remains. Furthermore, she feels guilty about her infraction and will think about the accident for some time to come. She may even have a new fear of driving a car in bad weather. She must also make satisfaction, as a matter of justice, for the damage she caused, while it is in her power to do so. If she doesn't, she will be handed over to the judge who will compel her to pay for the damage. In that case, because she refused to satisfy her obligations while she had the chance, the judge would also punish her (perhaps by giving her a fine or suspending her license).

It should not be difficult for Christians to see in this story an analogy to our spiritual lives. We commit a sin, confess our sins to God, and God forgives us. Yet, even after we are forgiven, the sin has ongoing effects. For ourselves, we feel shame and remorse of conscience. We feel small and weakened. Sometimes we may even feel more disposed to sin. We don't feel the same as we did before committing the sin. And we know that these feelings are manifestations of God's justice.

Regarding the effects on others, we may have injured someone's reputation through the sin of calumny. We may have harmed someone's financial condition through greed. We may have hurt those we love through selfishness. In each case we know we have altered the balance of equity between us and those we have offended. Most importantly, our sins and their effects impede our union with our Lord Jesus Christ, who commands us to be perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect.¹

Although Jesus requires us to be perfect, most people— even those who die in God's favor—never reach this state of perfection prior to their death. They died loving and fearing God but did not overcome the imperfections of their fallen human natures. These imperfections often include attachments to created goods, inordinate desires for earthly pleasures, and small but habitual sins. They also include the satisfactions still owed to God, to restore the equality of justice for the many sins that they committed during their lives.

If, as Scripture says, “nothing unclean” shall enter heaven,² how can these imperfect souls ever enter into eternal paradise? If Scripture teaches that without “holiness” no one shall see the Lord,³ how can these souls hope to behold the face of the all-perfect and holy God? The answer: purgatory. In purgatory, God purifies the soul of its imperfections through the fire of His divine justice. During this finite but painful process, the soul is purged of its evil inclinations and makes final satisfaction to God for its sins. After the purification is complete, God admits the soul into heaven where it enjoys the Beatific Vision for all eternity.

Before Jesus exhorted the crowd in His Sermon on the Mount to be perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect, He told them to make friends with their accusers while they were still able to do so. Jesus warned them that if they didn't, the Judge would put them into prison and they would not be released until they paid the last penny.⁴ In this parable, Jesus is warning His followers about the rigors of purgatory and the debt of sin. If in this life we fail to pay our spiritual debt to God, the debt for our sins, we will be detained by the

Judge in the next life until we have made full satisfaction for it.

* * * *

Purgatory is one of the most divisive doctrines between Catholics and Protestants. It is also one of the most misunderstood. That is because the doctrine covers the most theological territory. To believe in purgatory is to believe in the Catholic understanding of sin, redemption, grace, and judgment. This means that purgatory is a dogma of the Catholic faith.

Unfortunately, many Catholics don't believe in or understand purgatory. There are many reasons for this. Certainly, simple ignorance—of Scripture and of Church teaching—is one reason. Another reason is the influence of our culture, which ignores and even denies the reality of sin in our world. This error has even trickled into corners of Catholic education, where there has been a de-emphasis on God's justice and an over-emphasis on His mercy and benevolence. We see examples of this at many Catholic funerals, where a white-vested priest assures us that the deceased is in heaven, where we will all someday be reunited. We rarely hear about the reality of purgatory and the need to pray for these departed souls. This becomes a grave injustice to those deceased who are suffering in purgatory and need our prayers for their deliverance.

Although it may sometimes be ignored by those who are more comfortable preaching about God's mercy rather than His justice, the doctrine of purgatory is in fact one of the most merciful and consoling doctrines that Scripture teaches. God purifies us from our defects precisely because of His mercy. God refines His children in the fire of His love so that they can fully attain to the joys of heaven. God perfects us for our own benefit, not His. As they say, "no pain, no gain." Through the pain of purgatory, we gain the bliss of heaven. Without purgatory, not only would those of us with unfinished spiritual business be unable to enjoy heaven, we wouldn't make it there in the first place.

There are some, usually Protestants, who do not underemphasize God's justice, and who are familiar with Scripture, but still have difficulty with the doctrine of purgatory. However, when you get right down to it, these are the same people who have difficulty with the plain meaning of Scripture in other areas too. If these people don't take Jesus literally when He says "this is my body"⁵ or "whose sins you forgive are forgiven,"⁶ they are unlikely to take Jesus literally when He says that God punishes and forgives sins in the afterlife.⁷ If these people don't take Paul literally when he says God

condemns us to hell for our wicked deeds,⁸ they are unlikely to take Paul literally when he reveals that we must pass through fire after our death to be saved.⁹ A Protestant's denial of purgatory is invariably based on his built-in presuppositions about how to interpret Scripture, and not on what Scripture actually says.

Certainly, Protestants raise many legitimate questions regarding purgatory. For example, if Jesus died for our sins, why does anyone have to go to purgatory? If Jesus took on the punishment for our sins on Calvary, why would God punish us further after we die? If Jesus paid the debt for our sins, why do we still owe a debt after our death? Doesn't the doctrine of purgatory take away from Jesus' saving death on the cross?

* * * *

These are very good questions, and in this book I hope to provide the answers.

Unlike what some Protestants contend, purgatory is not a novel teaching concocted by the Catholic Church during the Middle Ages to scare the faithful into giving alms and doing penance. As we will see, the doctrine of purgatory is explicitly taught in Scripture. The doctrine of purgatory is also found in the writings of the early Church Fathers, from the very beginning of the Church. This means that purgatory is a revelation of Jesus Christ given to His apostles. Purgatory is part of the Deposit of Faith "which was once for all delivered to the saints."¹⁰

In fact, the Jews, who were first to receive "the oracles of God,"¹¹ believed in a state after death where sins could be forgiven. God revealed this truth to the Jews in both Scripture and the prophetic tradition. In addition to the many Old Testament verses revealing how God purifies His elect through trial by fire,¹² we see the common Jewish practice of praying for the dead in the actions of Judas Maccabeas, one of the greatest warriors in Jewish history:

For if he were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been super-fluous and foolish to pray for the dead . . . Therefore he made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin.¹³

Interestingly, although most Protestants claim to deny the doctrine of purgatory, they believe in the doctrine implicitly. Protestants admit that Christians continue to sin until the end of their lives. However, they also confess that we will no longer be sinning in heaven. It necessarily follows,

then, that there must be a final purification between death and eternal life. Whether the purification happens instantaneously or not is not the issue. The issue is that there is some kind of purification that moves us from a sinful state to a non-sinful state, and this is what the Church calls purgatory. Moreover, it follows that just as we can pray for someone's sanctification in this life, we can also pray for his sanctification in purgatory. Popular Protestant author C.S. Lewis in fact argued that our souls demand purgatory.

Indeed, reason alone demands the existence of purgatory. After all, it is probable that most God-fearing people die with at least small sins on their souls, or with sinful inclinations that they never completely conquered. Since nothing defiled can be in God's presence, it follows that these souls cannot be admitted into heaven with those imperfections. And yet these souls, so close to God, are not deserving of eternal hell-fire, for such a punishment would not be proportionate to the offense. In short, many departed souls are worthy neither of everlasting punishment nor immediate happiness. Because God desires all men to be saved, reason, then, insists on a transitional state where good souls are cleansed of their remaining imperfections so that they are made fit for the bliss of heaven.

Scripture until the Protestant revolt in the sixteenth century.

The human heart also demonstrates that there is a purgatory. Who doesn't remember his deceased loved ones in his prayers? I bet there aren't many—even among those who, like Protestants and even non-Christians, don't believe in purgatory. Why do these people remember the dead in their prayers? Because desiring the well-being and happiness of departed family and friends is an instinct of the human heart. If there were only heaven and hell, how could we explain this instinct? In heaven, hope is unnecessary and happiness a certainty; in hell, hope is lost and misery guaranteed. The blessed in heaven don't need our prayers, and the damned in hell can't use them.

* * * *

This book has three goals: First, to explain the biblical basis for purgatory by examining the relevant Scriptural texts and the writings and interpretations of the Church Fathers. Second, to inspire us to live holy lives and avoid purgatory by the many means Christ has given to us through His Church. Third, to encourage us to pray for our brothers and sisters in purgatory so they may be delivered from their sufferings. Pursuing these goals with faith, hope and charity will be pleasing to God, and merit for us both satisfaction for our sins and greater glory in heaven.

If the work which any man has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.¹⁴

John Salza
Feast of Our Lady, Virgin and Queen
May 31, 2008, Anno Domini

1 Cf. Mt 5:48

2 Rev 21:27. Scripture verses are taken from the *Revised Standard Version—Catholic Edition*, or the *Douay-Rheims* if noted.

3 Heb 12:14.

4 Mt 5:25-26

5 Mt 26:26; Mk 14:22; Lk 22:19.

6 Jn 20:23.

7 Lk 12:47-48; Mt 12:32.

8 Rom 2:8; 2 Cor 11:15; Gal 5:19-21; 2 Thess 1:8-9; 1 Tim 1:9-10

9 1 Cor 3:15

10 Jude 1:3

11 Rom 3:2. Pre-Christian and post-Christian Jews (particularly Orthodox Jews), as well as Orthodox Christians, also believe in purgatory. Today, Orthodox Jews are often seen praying for the dead at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem.

12 Prov 17:3; Dan 12:9-10; Wis 3:5-6; Sir 2:5.

13 2 Macc 12:44-45. All Christians held the book of Maccabees as inspired

14 1 Cor 3:14-15

PURGATORY AN INTRODUCTION

What Purgatory Is

About heaven, Scripture says, “nothing unclean shall enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Rev 21:27). The word for “unclean” (from the Greek, *koinon*) refers to a spiritual contamination that must be cleansed before we can enter into God’s presence. Habakkuk also says, “Thou who art of purer eyes than to behold evil and canst not look on wrong” (1:13). Because God is “holy, holy, holy,” He will allow nothing to enter His dwelling place with the slightest spot or blemish (cf. Rev 4:8).

The word “purgatory” comes from the Latin *purgare* which means to purge, purify, or make clean.¹⁵ The Church teaches that it is a place or condition of temporal punishment for departed souls who are destined for heaven but not completely purified from sin. Through this purgative process, spiritual contamination is removed and soul is made wholly pleasing to God so it can live forever with Him in heaven. The Church often refers to the souls in purgatory as the Holy Souls, the Poor Souls, or the Suffering Souls.

Purgatory is demanded by God’s justice. When we sin, we incur before God the liability of guilt and the liability of punishment. God forgives the guilt of sin through His mercy, but punishes the sinner by His justice.¹⁶ If God’s justice demands that sin be punished, it follows that one who dies with contrition for his sins but before satisfying the full punishment for them will suffer the remaining punishment in the afterlife.

Protestants often point out that the word “purgatory” is not in the Bible. On this basis, they conclude that purgatory is a false doctrine. This approach exhibits the common fallacy among Protestants, that something must be explicit in the Bible for it to be true.¹⁷ Yet the Bible never teaches such a thing. Instead, Scripture commands us to follow both the written and unwritten traditions that Christ and the apostles handed on to us through the Church.¹⁸ Nevertheless, as we will see, not only is the doctrine of purgatory part of the unwritten apostolic tradition (which we will see in the chapter on the Fathers), it is also expressly taught in Scripture. Therefore, to believe in the Bible means we must also believe in purgatory

Protestants also reject purgatory on the basis that Christ has made complete satisfaction for our sins. While this sounds like a pious thing to believe, it's misleading.

It is true that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was more than sufficient to atone for all punishment (temporal and eternal) due to sin. The Passion of Christ was a superabundant work of satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. Christ gave the Father more than was necessary to compensate for our sins. As the Apostle John says, "And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world."¹⁹ Both Catholics and Protestants agree on this elementary point.

However, although Christ alone has made satisfaction for the eternal punishment for sin, He specifically requires us to participate in making satisfaction for the temporal punishments for our sin. Temporal punishments refer to the personal, social, ecclesial, and cosmic effects that our sins cause, which must be remedied by virtue of God's divine justice. We participate with Christ by enduring the trials and sufferings of this life, as well as through acts of penance.

This is why Paul says, "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church" (Col 1:24). If Christ made complete atonement for our sins, then how can Paul say that there is something "lacking" in His sufferings? There cannot be, insofar as the remission of the eternal punishment is concerned. Only a being with eternal power could atone for eternal punishment, and that is exactly what Christ did for us. It necessarily follows, then, that what is "lacking in Christ's afflictions" refers to the debt of temporal punishment that we must suffer, in justice, for our sins. According to Paul, we are able to "complete" or satisfy this punishment that God imposes when our own sufferings are joined to those of Christ. As we will see, God requires this suffering because it restores the sinner to the equality of justice and allows the sinner to achieve the holiness that is required for heaven (cf. Heb 12:10).

Because making satisfaction for our debt of punishment is difficult, Scripture warns us to fear the consequences of forgiven sin: "Be not without fear about sin forgiven."²⁰ Of course, if there were no consequences to forgiven sin, there would be nothing to fear. If we do make sufficient satisfaction in this life for our many sins and die in a state of grace, we will go straight to heaven. However, if in this life we don't "complete" what is

“lacking in Christ’s afflictions” for our sins, we will do so in the next, which is purgatory. As Paul says regarding God’s judgment, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb 10:31).

The Church’s Teaching on Purgatory

Before we analyze the scriptures, let’s see what the Church says about purgatory. In the Catechism of the Catholic Church we read:

All who die in God’s grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven. The Church gives the name purgatory to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned. The Church formulated her doctrine of faith on purgatory especially at the Councils of Florence and Trent.

Based on the teaching of Scripture and the Church Fathers, the Council of Florence (1439) defined purgatory as follows:

It is likewise defined, that, if those truly penitent have departed in the love of God, before they have made satisfaction by worthy fruits of penance for sins of commission and omission, the souls of these are cleansed after death by purgatorial punishments . . .²²

The Council of Trent (1563) declared:

Since the Catholic Church, instructed by the Holy Spirit, in conformity with the sacred writings and the ancient tradition of the Fathers in sacred councils, and very recently in this ecumenical Synod, has taught that there is a purgatory, and that the souls detained there are assisted by the suffrages of the faithful and especially by the acceptable sacrifice of the altar, the holy Synod commands the bishops that they insist that the sound doctrine of purgatory, which has been transmitted by the holy Fathers and the holy Councils, be believed by the faithful of Christ, be maintained, taught, and everywhere preached.²³

Trent continued:

If anyone shall say that after the reception of the grace of justification, to every penitent sinner the guilt is so remitted and the penalty of eternal punishment so blotted out that no penalty of temporal punishment remains to be discharged either in this world or in the world to come in purgatory before the entrance to the kingdom of heaven can be opened: let him be anathema.²⁴

For the Heaven-Bound

Based on these definitions, we can summarize the Church's teaching on purgatory as follows: First, purgatory is for persons who die in God's grace, without mortal sins on their souls, and are thus destined for heaven. Mortal sins involve grave matter and the sinner's knowledge and full consent.²⁵ These sins are called "mortal" (that is, deadly) because they expel grace from the soul, precluding it from obtaining union with God, the source of all life.

In his first epistle, the Apostle John is said to make a distinction between mortal and non-mortal (or "venial") sins. He writes: "There is sin which is mortal. I do not say that one is to pray for that. All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin which is not mortal" (1 Jn 5:16-17). Those who die with their mortal sins having been forgiven, or having committed venial sins only, are assured of their place in heaven (although they may have to go to purgatory for final purification).

Thus, purgatory is not for persons who died with unforgiven mortal sin. These souls knowingly chose sin over God during their lives and failed to repent of their sins before death. These are the souls of the reprobate who "will be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Rev 20:10). Because those in purgatory are guaranteed of their place in heaven, purgatory is a temporary, transitional state between death and eternal life with God.

For Purification and Satisfaction

Secondly, as we have seen, purgatory is a process of purification from sin and of making satisfaction for the debt of punishment due to sin. Even though they have repented of their sins, the Holy Souls still owe God reparation for the damage their sins have caused in accordance with God's standard of justice and equity. Purgatory expiates the temporal punishment due to these sins through the fires of God's divine justice and love.

We will see this clearly when we examine 1 Corinthians 3:15. In this passage, Paul explains how one must pass "through fire" after death before receiving salvation. This process of expiation inflicts the punishment due for the forgiven sins and roots out the defects that moved the soul to sin in the first place. Through this process, the soul achieves the requisite holiness that God requires for it to be suitable for heaven (cf. Heb 12:14). We will also examine the biblical passages that teach about making satisfaction to God for the temporal punishments due for our sins, as well as examples of this

process found in Scripture.

Relief from Suffrages

A third key Catholic belief about purgatory is that the souls there can have their sufferings lessened, and even be delivered from their torments completely, by the suffrages of those on earth. Suffrages are acts of penance performed by the faithful, such as prayer, fasting and almsgiving. As we will further see in the last chapter, because those in purgatory are members of the one Body of Christ, they can be assisted by other members of the Body on earth.²⁷ The Apostles' Creed refers to this spiritual relationship as the Communion of Saints, which is an article of faith.

Although God requires from the members of the Body satisfaction for their sins, He doesn't necessarily require it from the member who owes it. God is so merciful that He accepts satisfaction for sin from any member He chooses. As we have seen, this is why Paul can say, "I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church" (Col 1:24).

By saying that his sufferings are for "your sake" and for "the sake of the body, the church," Paul reveals that one member's suffrages are able to help another member and make up for "what is lacking" in his own suffrages. In other words, God allows one member to merit satisfaction for another member's sins, just as He allowed Christ to atone for the eternal punishment for our sins.

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What Purgatory Is Not

The foregoing information helps us understand what purgatory is. But it also helps us understand what purgatory is not. This is equally important, because many people have mistaken ideas about purgatory. For example, some people think that purgatory is a place where people get a "second chance" after death to accept God and be saved. Others think that purgatory is an alternative destination for people who are "too good" for hell but "not good enough" for heaven. Some also think that purgatory is a place where the soul works for heaven and gains additional merits from God. These views are erroneous.

Not a “Second Chance”

We are given only one opportunity to respond to God’s grace in Christ and accept His mercy—and that is during our earthly lives. This is our only chance to “work out our own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil 2:12). Once we die, the condition of our souls is fixed and our fate sealed. As Paul says in his letter to the Hebrews, men “die once, and after that comes judgment” (Heb 9:27). Purgatory does not give someone a “second chance” to accept Jesus Christ after he dies.

After He judges us, Christ will no longer “deal with our sins.” That is, Christ will no longer give us an opportunity to repent of them and He will no longer forgive them. Once the soul leaves the body in death, the time for clemency and forgiveness has passed. God judges the soul according to the objective state of its condition at the moment of death.

The Church calls Christ’s judgment of the soul immediately after death the Particular Judgment. This is the individual judgment that God renders for each and every soul. Paul refers to this judgment when he says, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body.”²⁸

This judgment is to be distinguished from the General Judgment, which will occur at the end of the world when Christ separates the sheep from the goats.²⁹ At the General Judgment, Christ will simply proclaim publicly each person’s Particular Judgment: those who were judged favorably will have their bodies resurrected to eternal life, and those who were judged evil will have theirs resurrected to eternal condemnation.³⁰

It is a dreadful thought to think about appearing before the judgment seat of the Lord Jesus Christ to render an account of our sins. The sheer enormity of our many sins, both of commission and omission, should inspire in us a holy fear of God who will hold us accountable for each and every one of them. As Jesus said, “do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”³¹

Not an “Alternative Destination”

Purgatory is not a “middle state” between the place of the saved and the place of the damned. Jesus revealed in Scripture that there are only two ultimate destinations for those who were able to choose good or evil during

their lives. Those who loved God and their neighbors as themselves will “inherit the kingdom prepared for [them] from the foundation of the world” (Mt 25:34). Those who did evil will be thrown “into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mt 25:41).

Paul reiterates Jesus’ teaching: “For he will render to every man according to his works: for those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are factious and do not obey the truth, but obey wickedness, there will be wrath and fury.”³² For those who were given an opportunity to obey God and keep His commandments, Jesus says there will be either “eternal life” or “eternal punishment” (Mt 25:46). Thus purgatory cannot be a third place, that is, an alternative to heaven and hell.

What about Limbo?

The Church throughout the centuries has taught about a third possible destination after death called limbo. Limbo is said to be the eternal resting place for those who die unbaptized but without grievous sin (for example, unbaptized babies). This teaching came about because Scripture is clear that “nothing unclean” shall enter heaven,³³ and all men (through no fault of their own) are born into this world unclean: “Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned” (Rom 5:12). As we will further see later in the book, this sin which we have all inherited from Adam is called original sin. According to Scripture and Tradition, baptism washes away original sin, thereby removing this obstacle to heaven. Jesus taught that baptism is necessary for salvation when He said, “unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”³⁴ There are many other Scriptures demonstrating that baptism washes away sin.³⁵ The rationale for limbo is as follows: Because baptism alone washes away original sin, unbaptized persons cannot go to heaven; however, because God does not punish those who don’t commit deliberate sin, unbaptized persons without serious sin do not justly deserve hell. If true, this would necessitate the existence of a third place for these unbaptized souls, which we call limbo (from the Latin word *limbus* meaning “on the margin”). It is the common opinion of the Fathers and doctors of the Church that souls in limbo, although deprived of the Beatific Vision, experience a state of natural happiness.³⁶

The doctrine of limbo has been consistently taught throughout the ages, but the Church has never formally elevated limbo to a dogma of the faith.³⁷ Unlike purgatory, which was believed by all of the Church Fathers from the very beginning (and which is a dogma of faith), limbo has been advanced as a common theological opinion, but not an infallible dogma.³⁸ Thus, Catholics are not required to believe in limbo as an article of faith. The Church also urges us to hope for the salvation of unbaptized babies, because God is not bound by His sacraments.³⁹ Nevertheless, because limbo has been taught by the ordinary Magisterium as well as many great churchmen and theologians over the centuries, it holds significant theological weight and cannot be prudently dismissed, in spite of some human sentiments to the contrary.

While the Bible does not definitively reveal that there is a limbo, this doesn't mean that a third place in the afterlife is inconsistent with Scripture. To the contrary, in Luke's gospel we learn that Lazarus was in "Abraham's bosom," which is sometimes called the "Limbo of the Fathers" or "Hades."⁴⁰ Abraham's bosom was the place where the souls of the righteous were detained prior to Jesus' resurrection but which was not heaven.

No soul could go to heaven until Jesus appeased the Father's wrath against sin through His sacrifice on Calvary. Thus, immediately after Jesus died, He descended to Hades to inform the righteous souls of their deliverance.⁴¹ This is why the Apostles' Creed says, "He descended into hell (Hades)," which was the realm of the righteous dead. So if Scripture teaches about a place for the righteous dead that was not heaven, then a third place such as purgatory (a place for the righteous dead that is not heaven) is certainly possible. As we will see in the next section, it is not only possible, but a certainty.

Not a Place of Effort and Merit

In purgatory, the soul does none of the work of purification; rather God does all the work. The souls in purgatory have nothing to do because they have already "worked out their own salvation" during their earthly lives (Cf. Phil 2:12). Their salvation is guaranteed. Scripture is clear that righteous souls are finally freed from their labors. Paul says, "for whoever enters God's rest also ceases from his labors" (Heb 4:10). The angel in the Book of Revelation⁴² also says, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth. 'Blessed indeed,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors'" (Rev 14:13).

While the soul rests from its earthly labors, God engages in His heavenly labor of purification. God tests the soul in the fires of His divine love as a refiner does with silver and gold. God says through the prophet Zechariah, “And I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested” (13:9). Malachi also reveals, “For he is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver” (3:2-3). The Book of Proverbs says, “The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and the Lord tries hearts.”⁴³ And we read in Sirach, “For gold is tested in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation” (2:5).

In addition, it is generally believed that the souls in purgatory are incapable of increasing their merits before God. Merits are gratuitous gifts that God bestows on the faithful for obeying His commandments during their lives. These gifts include an increase in grace, a higher degree of charity, closer union with the Trinity, and a corresponding increase in heavenly glory. As Augustine says, when God grants us merits He is simply crowning His own gifts. Man obtains from God what God gave man the power to do in the first place.

In describing how God rewards us with merits, Paul says, “He who plants and he who waters are equal, and each shall receive his wages according to his labor” (1 Cor 3:8). The quality of the labor dictates the quality of the reward (merit). Paul also says, “For God is not so unjust as to overlook your work and the love which you showed for his sake in serving the saints,” (Heb 6:10) and, “I seek the fruit which increases to your credit” (Phi 4:17). The “fruit” symbolizes the “works” we are called to perform which increase our merits, or “credits,” before God. Jesus also teaches about our need to bear good fruit to increase our justification before God.⁴⁴

Scripture teaches that the merits we gain on earth are reserved for our enjoyment in heaven. After the angel in Revelation praises the souls in heaven who “rest from their labors,” he emphatically proclaims “for their deeds follow them!” (Rev 14:13). Paul also says that those who are “rich in good deeds, liberal and generous,” are “laying up for themselves a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life which is life indeed” (1 Tim 6:18-19). Our Blessed Lord commanded us, “lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal.”⁴⁵

Of course, because of the immeasurable inequality between God and man, man has no strict right to merit anything from God. As Scripture says, “Who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?”⁴⁶ God owes man nothing. Man can only merit rewards from God because God has freely chosen to associate man with the work of His grace. This relationship between God and man begins at baptism when we become “justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life” (Tit 3:7).

When we are justified by grace, we become adopted sons of God and heirs of His kingdom. In this new relationship based on grace, we are able to call God “Abba! Father!” (cf. Gal 4:6-7). Grace makes us children of the Father, and the Father bestows merits upon His children because it is in His nature to do so (not because He has an obligation to do so). As Paul says, we have nothing to boast about before God.⁴⁷ All merits from God come solely from God’s grace and benevolence, and not from any obligation God has to us. Outside of God’s grace, it is impossible to merit anything from God.

We are able to gain merits from God only when our souls are united to our bodies. This is why Paul says that, at our individual judgments, “each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body” (2 Cor 5:10). Once the soul leaves the body—at death—the time for merit has passed. The soul is judged and rewarded (or punished) according to its merits (or demerits).⁴⁸ Further, once a person dies, his time for contrition has passed. This is because contrition is a meritorious act which comes from God’s grace. Repentance and conversion must happen during this life, when we have the chance.

Speaking of the body, many Protestants say “to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.” They base their assertion by twisting a statement Paul makes in his Second Letter to the Corinthians. If being absent from the body (death) means being present with the Lord (heaven), then, the Protestant argues, there can be no purgatory.

But this is what Paul actually says: “So we are always of good courage; we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. We are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord” (2 Cor 5:6-8). Paul doesn’t say that a soul separated from the body is automatically with the Lord, or that when we die we immediately go to heaven. He simply says we would rather be at home with the Lord than in our bodies. Paul never says a thing about what happens between death and glorification. Moreover, when a

soul goes to purgatory, that soul is with the Lord, for it is the Lord who is purifying it for heaven.

Protestants also sometimes refer to Paul's statement in his Letter to the Philippians: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If it is to be life in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better" (1:21-23). Yet, again, Paul is not making a doctrinal statement about what happens to the soul at death. He is simply saying that his desire is to be with Christ rather than labor on earth. Nothing in these verses even remotely addresses the doctrine of purgatory.

What Purgatory May Be

Like heaven and hell, purgatory concerns life after death. Any time we discuss the afterlife, we are dealing with mystery. As Paul says, "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully" (1 Cor 13:12). While we know certain things about purgatory from Scripture and Tradition, there are many things we do not know with certainty. For example, we don't know where purgatory is, the exact nature of the sufferings endured there, or how long it lasts. Nevertheless, Scripture and Tradition provide us many clues, as do the private revelations of many saints.

Private, or particular, revelations are revelations that God gives to individuals in the form of visions or apparitions.⁴⁹ They are to be distinguished from the public revelation that God has given to the Church in Scripture and Tradition. This public revelation is called the "Deposit of Faith" and includes those truths that are necessary for our salvation. Private revelations—those outside the Deposit of Faith—are based on human testimony, and no Catholic is required to believe in them.

However, when the Church authenticates a private revelation of a saint, we cannot dismiss it without offending against reason, for reason demands an assent to the truth when it has been satisfactorily demonstrated. And so in addition to appealing to Scripture and Tradition, we will also occasionally mention some of the many private revelations that holy men and women have received about purgatory. The holiness of these saints is recognized by Christians of all persuasions. Their private revelations, at a minimum, give us abundant spiritual food for thought.⁵⁰

Where is Purgatory?

As we have seen, the most common phrase describing purgatory is a “place or condition” of temporal punishment after death. While most modern theologians prefer to describe purgatory as a “condition,” (or a “state” or “process”), one doesn’t err by calling purgatory a “place.” When Jesus warned sinners that they would be detained in prison until they paid the last penny, (Mt 5:25-26) the early Church interpreted Jesus’ warning as a reference to purgatory. Thus, purgatory is a “place” insofar as it detains the soul for purification. Just as the soul was detained in the body during earthly life, the soul may also be detained in the “prison” of purgatory after death.⁵¹

If purgatory can be called a “place,” where is this place? Theologians throughout the centuries have speculated that purgatory is in the interior of the earth, in the same or similar place as the hell of the damned. This was the position held by Augustine and Aquinas. Only God knows for sure, and there are no compelling arguments on the question. Nevertheless, Scriptures may provide some subtle inferences.

In Matthew’s gospel, Jesus says, “so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Mt 12:40). As we have seen, when Christ was in the “heart of the earth,” He preached deliverance to the souls of the righteous who were waiting for the gates of heaven to be opened for them. These righteous would have included those in purgatory as well, for they were likewise to receive the message of salvation, even though they were making final satisfaction for their sins. If so, this means that purgatory is in the “heart of the earth” where Jesus descended after His death.

In Luke’s gospel, even though the rich man was being tormented in Hades, he could still see Lazarus who was in Abraham’s bosom, and could communicate with Abraham (cf. Lk 16:19-26). Assuming that Abraham’s bosom was in the heart of the earth (as shown above), then it is reasonable to conclude that the rich man’s place of torment was near or joined to it, separated only by the “great chasm.”

While the traditional interpretation is that the rich man is in the hell of the damned, it is possible that he was in purgatory.⁵² This is because he still loved his brothers, whereas those in hell no longer have love. He demonstrated love for his brothers by begging Abraham to warn his five brothers of his place of torment (vv. 27-28). If the rich man was in purgatory, then purgatory would be in “the heart of the earth”— the locale of Abraham,

Lazarus, and the rest of the righteous dead (cf. Mt 12:40).

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul says, “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord” (2:10-11). In this verse, Paul is describing the threefold nature of the Church: the Church Triumphant (in heaven), the Church Militant (on earth) and the Church Suffering (in purgatory). If read literally, which is how Catholics read Scripture unless there is a good reason not to, purgatory would be “under the earth” — that is, within the bowels of the earth’s surface.

In the Book of Revelation, John describes those who occupy the earth and the sea, which suggests a continuum of presence on, above, and below the earth’s surface: “And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all therein, saying, ‘To him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might for ever and ever!’” (5:13) This verse hints that those “under the earth” (those in purgatory) are in the subterranean space below the sea, as distinguished from those creatures who are in the sea and on dry land.

It is also reasonable to conclude that God punishes those in the bowels of the earth who loved earthly things over heavenly things. Because man sins by going “down to matter” and not “up to God,” a place of punishment in the heart of the earth seems appropriate, whether it’s temporal or eternal.⁵³ Nothing would prevent the all-powerful God from maintaining a hollow in the earth for this purpose. Geologists also believe that fire exists at the earth’s core.

Scripture also reveals that God punishes sinners in the bowels of the earth. During the reign of Moses, a man named Korah rose up against Moses and his priests (cf. Num 16). Korah and 250 of his followers attempted to confer upon themselves the dignity of the priesthood without the authority of Moses. After Moses pronounced his judgment on the evil actions of Korah and his rebels, God caused the earth to swallow them all alive. Scripture says, “the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up . . . So they and all that belonged to them went down alive into Sheol; and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly” (vv. 32-33).

Many saints received revelations that purgatory (and hell) was somewhere in the earth. Saint Teresa had visions of souls coming forth from the depths of the earth and ascending into heaven by the hands of angels. During prayer, Saint Magdalen de Pazzi saw the soul of one of her deceased religious sisters

in purgatory come forth from the earth wrapped in a cloak of flames. Saint Frances of Rome was conducted by an angel into both hell and purgatory, which were situated in the bowels of the earth. In Saint Lidwina of Schiedam's vision of purgatory, she saw dungeons, prisons, and other frightening dwellings in the lower regions of the earth.

The Blessed Virgin Mary revealed to three shepherd children (Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta) in Fatima, Portugal a frightening vision of the happenings in the bowels of the earth.⁵⁴ In this vision, the children saw a vast sea of fire with souls appearing like burning embers with human forms. They were floating about in the conflagration and were raised into the air by flames and great clouds of smoke. The children also heard shrieks and groans of pain and despair. Although Lucia later explained that this was a vision of hell, the elements in the vision (fire, flames, smoke, cries) are also consistent with the private revelations that many saints have received about purgatory. This is but a tiny sampling of those visions received by saints suggesting purgatory's existence in the heart of the earth.

How Painful is Purgatory?

It is generally understood that there are two kinds of pain in purgatory: Pain of sense and pain of loss. The pain of loss consists of being detained from beholding the face of God, the very end for which God created the soul. When the soul was in the body, it struggled between satisfying the desires of the spirit and the desires of the flesh. The Book of Wisdom says, "a perishable body weighs down the soul" (9:15), and Paul repeatedly refers to the tension between body and soul (the flesh and the spirit).⁵⁵ When the soul is freed of the body, it seeks God alone. Thus, being deprived of its only desire—God—during its detention in purgatory produces tremendous spiritual torments for the soul, from which it will not be released until it has "paid the last penny" (Mt 5:26).

The pain of sense consists of sensible suffering, akin to what we would experience in the body. Even though the body is no longer present, God in purgatory allows the soul to experience bodily pain because the sins for which it must make satisfaction were committed "in the body" (2 Cor 5:10). This is why in Luke's gospel the flames could torment the "tongue" of the rich man. Even though he was a disembodied soul, the rich man experienced sensible pain for his sins of gluttony.

In Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, chapter 3, he describes how God tests the soul after death. Paul reveals that the departed soul "suffers loss" as it is saved "through fire" after God judges the soul (1 Cor 3:15). We have also seen how Scripture alludes to God using "fire" to purify us like silver and gold. Thus, when read literally, Scripture teaches that the pain of purgatory is the pain of bodily (or "corporeal") fire.

Nevertheless, because the soul is spiritual and fire is material, many Protestants accuse the Catholic interpretation of being unreasonable and illogical. Is it?

Not according to Jesus, who said, "Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so it will be at the close of the age. The Son of man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and throw them into the furnace of fire; there men will weep and gnash their teeth" (Mt 13:40-42). In this warning, the Lord says that the souls of the accursed will suffer in fire "just as" the weeds are burned with corporeal fire.⁵⁶ Far from being an indication that these fires somehow differ, the Lord strongly indicates that they are the same.

In another warning of the end times, Jesus tells us He will say, "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mt 25:41). Because the incorporeal demons are currently being punished by the same fire that will receive the bodies of the damned at the end of time it follows that incorporeal souls, like demons, suffer from corporeal fire. This is why Paul says that the departed soul, being tried by the fire of God's justice, "suffers loss" before it obtains its eternal reward (1 Cor 3:15).

It is also a matter of divine justice that a person who sinned corporeally should also be punished corporeally. The Book of Wisdom says that one "is punished by the very things by which he sins" (11:15). We recall in Luke's gospel how the rich man "feasted sumptuously every day" (16:19). That means he overindulged in the pleasures of the tongue. Thus it's no surprise when he begs Abraham to send Lazarus to cool his tongue with water (v. 24).

Saints over the centuries have given us frightening revelations of the pains of purgatory. They have seen visions of violent flames, lava, hot chains, and irons punishing the souls of the just. They have heard screams and cries of agony and fury as the souls endured the fires of expiation. Those graced with these visions have all said that the chastisements of purgatory are beyond our comprehension, surpassing all the sufferings of this life. If a temporal fire

causes a painful burn to the skin in this life, how much more pain does a divine flame cause the soul in purgatory? It is a sobering meditation.

Venerable Bede reports a vision of purgatory consisting of deep cavern of fire on one side and ice and snow on the other. The souls would violently toss themselves back and forth between the fire and ice, between one torture and the other. As soon as a soul could no longer endure the flames, it plunged itself into the ice and snow, only to return to the fire, and then back to the ice and so forth, never to find repose. Job reveals this punishment as he speaks of God's judgment: "Let him pass from the snow waters to excessive heat, and his sin even to hell."⁵⁷ The Greek word for "hell" is Hades, the place of detention for departed souls.

In the Book of Revelation, Jesus threatened to punish Jezebel for her sin of adultery by throwing her "on a sick bed" where she committed her sins (2:22). The heavens also cry, "Render to her as she herself has rendered, and repay her double for her deeds; mix a double draught in the cup she mixed. As she glorified herself and played the wanton, so give her a like measure of torment and mourning" (18:6-7). The prophet Hosea also reveals that sinners "became detestable like the thing they loved" (9:10). This comes right before Hosea's warning in the previous verse: "he will remember their iniquity, he will punish their sins" (v.9). Ezekiel also reveals, "their silver and gold are not able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord; they cannot satisfy their hunger or fill their stomachs with it. For it was the stumbling block of their iniquity; therefore I will make it an unclean thing to them."⁵⁸

As we alluded to, the great minds of the Church agree that the least pain in purgatory surpasses the greatest pain of earthly life.⁵⁹ Regarding pain of sense, because punishment is inflicted upon the soul directly which is the source of all bodily sensations, it follows that this pain of sense is worse than anything the soul could experience in the body. The severity of the punishment, of course, depends upon the severity of the sins, for the Lord says, "I will recompense them according to their deeds" (Jer 25:14). The Lord also says that a man is punished "in proportion to his offense" (Deut 25:2).

Regarding pain of loss, the more something is desired the more painful is its absence. Since the soul in purgatory desires God alone and with the most intense desire, it follows that this pain of loss is worse than anything the soul could experience while on earth. The Fathers and Doctors of the Church agree that this pain of loss of the vision of God is the greatest pain of

purgatory.

Notwithstanding the supreme pains of purgatory, the souls there freely submit to their punishments out of their fervent love and desire for God. They would rather undergo these terrible torments than appear before God with their current defects. They love God above all things, for their disembodied souls seek Him alone. Furthermore, because God loves those He chastises,⁶⁰ He gives the souls in purgatory great consolations. Although God wants us to have a holy fear of sin and punishment, He wants us to temper that fear with great trust in His mercy, for God's mercy is as infinite as His justice. Thus, while their sufferings are like those of hell, their consolations give them a taste of heaven.⁶¹

How Long Does Purgatory Last?

Although we don't know exactly how time operates in the afterlife, it seems clear that souls are detained in purgatory "for a time."⁶² Jesus' warning that we will not get out of the prison of purgatory until we have paid the last penny means we are detained for a period of time (Mt 5:25-26). Of course, one person's debt may be larger or smaller than another's. This means the "time" for making payment (satisfying the debt of sin) will be longer for some than it will be for others.

The rich man in Hades was being tormented over a period of time, during which he expressed his anguish, asked for mercy and relief of his suffering, and begged for his brothers to be warned about his place of torment. The purgatorial pain of loss exists during the time in which the soul cannot see God, and ceases at the time of the soul's deliverance. How time is calculated after death we don't know for sure. But it is reasonable to presume that the suffering is not instantaneous. To the soul's perception it endures for a "time"—for some souls, a very long time.

In his first letter to the Corinthians (which we will examine in more detail in the third chapter), Paul uses metaphors to describe a person's works and how God judges those works after the person dies. Good works are symbolized by "gold, silver, precious stones" and bad works by "wood, hay, and stubble" (3:12). Paul reveals that after death God judges with fire the type of work each person has done while on earth. Those who have built with gold, silver, and precious stones receive their heavenly reward (v.14). Because the fire cannot consume these elements, they (the good works)

accompany the person into heaven. Those who have built with wood, hay, and stubble have a different outcome. Paul reveals that these materials (sins) are “burned up” in the fire (1 Cor 3:15). As we will later see, the person who built with these bad materials must also pass through the same fire before receiving salvation (v. 15). Thus, as the fire consumes the bad materials, it punishes the person who built with them.

The fire consumes these elements, and at different speeds. Why? Because wood remains longer in fire than hay or stubble. Hay and stubble burn more quickly, and wood burns more slowly. Paul’s metaphorical usage of these elements demonstrates the obvious: some sins are more grievous than others. Thus, some sins are punished longer and more severely in purgatory than others. Those who had graver sins (represented by wood) will be purified longer than those with lesser sins (represented by stubble). The severity of punishment corresponds to a person’s guilt, while the length of punishment corresponds to how deeply the sin has taken root in his soul.

So how long does this purification take? Well, in this life, we know that times of enjoyment appear to pass quickly while times of suffering seem long. The more intense the suffering, the longer it seems for time to pass. Many saints who have received revelations about purgatory have written about how the poor souls experience time. Their conclusions are unanimous: the shortest time in purgatory seems to be an extraordinarily, excessively long time. Hence, like the pains of sense and loss, this pain of duration (length of time) is intensified beyond anything we have experienced in this life. In fact, it is because the sufferings of purgatory (sense and loss) are so incredibly intense that the soul perceives time as it does.

One brief and very average account will suffice. The Dominican friar and bishop St. Antoninus records the story of a sick man who was given a choice by his guardian angel: either to die immediately and spend three days in purgatory, or to bear his illness for one more year and then go directly to heaven. The man chose purgatory. After one hour, his angel visited him in purgatory. The man complained to his angel that he had agreed to three days only but had been suffering in the purgatorial flames for several years. When the angel informed him that he had been in purgatory for only one hour, the surprised soul begged his angel to bring him back to earth where he would be willing to suffer as long as God willed.

This private revelation and others like it are consistent with the opinions of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church. Robert Bellarmine, for example, said

that the pains of purgatory seem to last not only ten and twenty years, but in some cases entire centuries. When the seer Lucia at Fatima asked the Blessed Mother about her deceased friend Amelia (who died at eighteen or twenty years of age), the Mother of God said, “she will be in purgatory until the end of the world.”⁶³ It is likely that even righteous people will have to expiate their venial sins and bad habits in purgatory. As Scripture says, “a righteous man falls seven times” in one day (Prov 24:16). How long will a righteous man have to suffer in purgatory? And how does this suffering compare to that of an unrighteous man? Although it is impossible to calculate with precision how long we would have to suffer in purgatory, the effort at least gives us something to think about.

Indeed, if people really contemplated the reality of suffering excruciating torments for a very long time after death, they would repent and amend their lives. A reasonable person would rather endure a deadly disease or forsake an abundant fortune in this short life rather than suffer the unfathomable pains of purgatory in the next life. If we cannot imagine enduring physical sufferings for ten or thirty or fifty years, how much more incomprehensible are the spiritual sufferings of purgatory? Surely, if we really knew (as did so many saints through private revelations), we would suffer the most severe penances in this world to avoid them in the world to come. In the last chapter, we will discuss how to avoid purgatory, as we unite our sufferings with the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Before we close this chapter, we must emphasize the following: God does not want us to go to purgatory. No, we impose purgatory on ourselves. Our Lord has told us, “my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Mt 11:30). If we love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength,⁶⁴ we have nothing to fear. The Apostle John teaches us that “we may have confidence for the day of judgment” if we keep God’s commandments and do what pleases Him (1 Jn 4:17). As we will see in the next chapter, we can do these things only by grace. The way we respond to God’s grace in this life will determine the outcome of the next. Our Lord loves us and will consume us in the fire of His love (Cf. Heb 12:29). Whether that will include a stop in purgatory is our choice.

With the foregoing information as background, let us now examine in more detail the Scriptural evidence for Purgatory.

15 The Greek transliterated word for “fire” is *puroo*, from which we get the word “purgatory.”

- 16 Scripture refers to the liability of guilt (*reatus culpae*) in Ps 5:10; 18:23; 25:11; 32:5; 51:2,7; 68:21; 109:7 and the liability of punishment (*reatus poena*) in Ps 59:5; 69:27; 89:32.
- 17 If the titles of all true doctrines had to be in Scripture, Protestants would have quite a problem. The titles “Trinity,” “Incarnation” and even “Bible” are not found in the Bible, yet are believed by all Protestants. Also, many Protestant doctrines are not found in Scripture or Tradition, like “total depravity” and “believer’s baptism,” as well as such novel practices as “altar calls” and “women pastors.”
- 18 1 Cor 11:2; 2 Thess 2:15; 3:6.
- 19 1 Jn 2:2 Douay-Rheims (DR).
- 20 Ecclesiasticus 5:5 (DR).
- 21 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), 1030-1031.
- 22 This teaching repeated the previous teaching from the Second Council of Lyons (1274): “Because if they die truly repentant in charity before they have made satisfaction by worthy fruits of penance for sins committed and omitted, their souls are cleansed after death by purgatorial or purifying punishments.”
- 23 Council of Trent, Session 25, *Decree Concerning Purgatory* (December 4, 1563).
- 24 Ibid., Session 6, Decree Concerning Justification, Canon 30 (January 13, 1547). The Church’s teaching on purgatory was reaffirmed at the Second Vatican Council in *Lumen Gentium*, No. 49.
- 25 These would include, for example, the sins of adultery, intentional homicide, idolatry, and blasphemy.
- 26 The word “venial” comes from the Latin *venia* which means pardon or forgiveness.
- 27 Cf. 1 Cor 12:12,27
- 28 2 Cor 5:10. See also Lk 16:22; 23:43 Rom 2:3,5; 14:10,12; Heb 9:27; Sir 11:26.
- 29 Cf. Mt 25:31-46; Jn 5:28-29; 6:40,44; 12:48; Acts 24:15; 2 Tim 4:8; Rev 20:11-15.
- 30 Cf. Jn 5:28-29; Rev 20:4-15.
- 31 Mt 10:28; Lk 12:4-5.
- 32 Rom 2:6,8.
- 33 Rev 21:27.
- 34 Jn 3:5. Cf. Mk 16:16.
- 35 E.g. Acts 9:18; 22:16; 1 Cor 6:11; Tit 3:5-7; Heb 10:22; 1 Pet 3:21. See also Rom 5:1-5.
- 36 Two of the greatest Catholic theologians—St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas—believed in limbo, although they disagreed about what the soul experienced there. Augustine said that these souls experience mild punishments while Aquinas and the majority of the saints taught that these souls are not punished at all, but enjoy natural happiness.
- 37 In addition to the common opinion of the Fathers, saints and doctors of the Church, a number of popes (Pope Siricius [385] Pope Innocent [414] Pope Zosimus [417] Pope Innocent III [1201] Pope John XXII [1321] Pope Martin V [1417] Pope Sixtus V [1588] and, Pope Pius VI [1794]) have denounced the belief that infants who die before baptism enjoy the rewards of eternal life. The Councils of Lyons II (1274) and Florence (1439) both declared that souls who die in original sin (unbaptized) are excluded from the Beatific Vision, but this would not include those souls who had a “baptism of desire” as taught by the Council of Trent (1547). In recent times, Pope Benedict XVI has allowed theologians to investigate the Church’s traditional teaching on limbo (resulting in no change in the doctrine).
- 38 Because the doctrine of limbo has been consistently taught by the Church’s ordinary Magisterium, it is considered more than a theological hypothesis, but not a *de fide* dogma.
- 39 The Council of Trent teaches that man is translated from the state of sin to the state of grace “through the laver of regeneration [baptism] or its desire.” *Decrees Concerning Justification*, Chapter IV (January 13, 1547). The Church has not defined the parameters of this “desire” (e.g., whether it applies to catechumens only, which is the traditional position; or to infants by virtue of the parents’ desire).

- 40 Cf. Lk 16:22-26. This limbo of the Fathers (*limbus patrum*) is different from the possible limbo of babies (*limbus infantium*), although they may be components of the same spiritual abode
- 41 Cf. Eph 4:8-9; 1 Pet 3:19; 4:6. See also Acts 2:27,31; 1 Cor 15:55.
- 42 The last book of the Bible also goes by the ancient and traditional name of the *Apocalypse*, meaning “unveiling
- 43 17:3. See also 1 Pet 1:6-7; Jude 23; Rev 3:18-19; Dan 12:9-10; Wis 3:5-6.
- 44 Mt 3:8,10; 7:16-20; 12:33; 13:23; 21:41,43; Mk 4:20; Lk 3:8-9; 6:43-44; 8:14-15; 13:6-7,9; Jn 4:36; 12:24; 15:2,4-5,8,16.
- 45 Mt 6:20. Cf. Mt 19:21; Mk 10:21; Lk 12:33; 18:22. Eph 2:9.
- 46 Rom 11:35. Cf. Job 35:7; 41:11.
- 47 Cf. Rom 2:17,23; 3:27; 4:2; 11:18; 1 Cor 1:29,31; 3:21; 4:7; 5:6; 2 Cor 10:17; Eph 2:9.
- 48 As we will see in 1 Cor 3:12-17, the souls in purgatory are both punished (through purification) and rewarded (with salvation).
- 49 A vision is an infusion of knowledge into the understanding of a person so that he can comprehend a mystery. An apparition is an objective phenomenon given by God which has an exterior object. Many saints have received visions and apparitions of purgatory
- 50 To read about private revelations of purgatory, I recommend *Purgatory— Explained by the Lives and Legends of the Saints*, Fr. F.X. Schouppe, S.J (TAN Books).
- 51 Many theologians, including Aquinas, teach that God assigns certain souls a special place of purification on earth, where they sometimes appear to instruct the living or to ask for prayers to lessen their punishments. This may be the cause of apparitions which people witness and are reported by the press from time to time.
- 52 This passage was interpreted to be a reference to purgatory in the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity* and in the writings of Tertullian
- 53 It is plausible to conclude that hell includes or is some how joined to purgatory, the limbo of the Fathers, and the limbo of babies (if such a place exists). Like the place of the damned, all three of these places are devoid of the Beatific Vision, although the manner of the soul’s existence (happiness or sadness) varies greatly.
- 54 The Mother of God appeared to the children six times between May 13 and October 13, 1917. During these appearances, Our Lady affirmed the doctrine of purgatory, along with other core doctrines of the Catholic Faith, and asked that the Pope with the bishops consecrate Russia to her Immaculate Heart. God authenticated these revelations on October 13, 1917 with the “Miracle of the Sun.” In this miracle, which was witnessed by 70,000 people, the sun whirled around, emitting brilliant lights which were not harmful to the human eye, and then plunged to the earth before returning to its normal orbit. Since 1930, the Catholic Church has officially recognized the revelations at Fatima.
- 55 Rom 7:5,18,25; 8:3-9,12-13; 9:8; 1 Cor 3:1,3; 15:50; Gal 3:3; 5:13,16-17; 19,24; 6:8,12-13; Eph 2:3; Col 2:23.
- 56 The text in Mt 13:40 uses the Greek adverb *houtos* which means “in like manner.” This means that the souls of the accursed will burn just like the weeds of the field. The only difference is that the accursed souls “will burn with unquenchable fire” (Mt 3:12). In the third chapter of this book, we will see another critical application of *houtos* found in 1 Cor 3:15.
- 57 Job 24:19 (DR). See also Ps 65:10,12.
- 58 Ezek 7:19-20. See also Isa 27:7-8; 28:17
- 59 Many have held this position including Augustine, Gregory, Chrysostom Bede, Anselm, Bernard, Aquinas, and Bellarmine.
- 60 Cf. Heb 12:6
- 61 For example, Catherine of Genoa said that God overwhelms the Holy Souls with such love that it would annihilate them if they were not immortal. As Magdalen de Pazzi witnessed her brother suffering in purgatory, she also noted his great happiness and satisfaction. Stanislaus of Cracow

learned from a soul he raised from the dead, that the soul preferred to return to the torments of purgatory than to risk losing his soul by remaining in this life. Catherine de Ricci, whom God allowed to suffer purgatorial punishments for a certain prince, reported that we endure the excesses of purgatory with great peace and love. Bridget of Sweden, and many other saints, also reveal that the Blessed Virgin Mary and the angels mitigate the chastisements of purgatory.

62 Some theologians refer to this transitional period as “aeviternity,” which is understood as the mean between time and eternity.

63 May 13, 1917.

64 Cf. Mt 22:37; Mk 12:30; Lk 10:27.

SATISFACTION FOR SIN

To this point, we have learned that purgatory is a place or condition of temporal punishment for souls who are going to heaven but have not made sufficient satisfaction for their sins while on earth. The sinner incurs punishment for forgiven mortal and venial sins, for unforgiven venial sins, and for any dross remaining in the soul. The Lord reveals through Isaiah, “I will clean purge away thy dross, and I will take away all thy tin” (1:25). In purgatory, God exacts from the soul the remaining satisfaction owed to Him as He purifies the soul from its sins and evil inclinations and prepares it for heaven.

Why God Demands Satisfaction

“Satisfaction” can be understood as compensation for injury inflicted. When a creature transgresses the laws of the Creator (that is, commits sin), he injures his relationship with God. This injury results in an inequality opposed to friendship with God as well as an inequality of justice. The word “equality” in our discussion means there is an “equation” between God and man according to the divine order established by God. When man throws the equation out of balance by sinning, God requires him to restore the balance as a matter of justice. The sinner does this by making satisfaction.

Hence, God wills us to endure temporal punishments as satisfaction for sin because His perfect justice and holiness demand it. Sin is a transgression against the order of divine justice with which God governs the universe. Sin offends God who has “arranged all things by measure and number and weight.”⁶⁵ The prophet cries, “Correct me, O Lord, but in just measure; not in thy anger, lest thou bring me to nothing” (Jer 10:24). God requires a just measure of satisfaction to restore His divine order, “For the Lord is a God of justice”⁶⁶ and “he judges the peoples with equity” (Ps 9:8). Just as God willed Christ to counterbalance the eternal consequences of sin through His infinite satisfaction (His death on the Cross), He wills us to satisfy the temporal consequences of sin through our finite satisfactions.

Satisfaction, then, is the act of punishment inflicted by God and incurred by sinners which restores the equality of friendship and justice between them. This punishment heals our past sins, but it also preserves us from future sins because man is not inclined to fall into the sin for which he has suffered

punishment. This means satisfaction has two components: penal compensation (for past sins) and willful preservation (from future sins).⁶⁷ Satisfaction means giving to God the due honor we owe Him. It is demanded by justice and inspired by charity.

In philosophy, we call satisfaction a “contrary movement” that restores the natural, moral, and divine order.⁶⁸ Satisfaction requires a movement contrary to that which one wishes. This is why when one abuses his freedom (through crime), his freedom is taken away (in prison). Or to return to our earlier example: damaging someone’s car is the first movement; paying to repair the car is the contrary movement that renders satisfaction. If I damaged my neighbor’s car and did not make satisfaction to my neighbor through an act that is contrary to my wish, a judge can force me to do so. He can order me to pay, or, if I am unable to pay, he can punish me by throwing me into prison. In either of these scenarios, satisfaction is rendered both to punish my offense and to preserve me from future offenses.

It is no different with God. When we sin—which is always an offense against God—we must make satisfaction to God to repair the relationship we have injured.⁶⁹ We must reestablish the equality of justice and friendship with God. David recognized this necessity when he said, “What shall I render to the Lord for all his bounty to me?” (Ps 116:12). We must suffer a movement that is contrary to our sinful desire to eliminate the imbalance we have created. Although Christ atoned for the eternal penalty, God requires us to make satisfaction for the temporal penalties. If we don’t make sufficient satisfaction to God for our sins in this life, we will have to do so in the next. The Supreme Lawgiver and Judge will detain us until we have fully paid our debt to Him.

Temporal Versus Eternal Punishment

We can understand the difference between temporal and eternal punishment, and its relation to sin, in the following way: If a person completely turns away (through mortal sin) from the infinite good that is God, there is a corresponding infinite punishment (endured in hell). If a person turns to a mutable good beyond right reason (venial sin), there is a finite punishment (endured here or in purgatory). The punishment is finite (temporal) because the good itself is finite and because the person hasn’t turned away from God completely. That is, the person hasn’t ultimately

chosen the mutable good over the immutable good. Hence, venial sins incur temporal punishment, while mortal sins incur eternal punishment.

When a person incurs eternal punishment (hell), he needs a satisfaction of infinite value to be released from his punishment. Of course, only God who has infinite power is able to provide infinite satisfaction. This He gave in the Person of Jesus Christ, an eternal being without sin. Man avails himself of Christ's atoning work by confessing his sins. The Apostle John says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn 1:9).

The Apostle John also records in his Gospel that Christ intends this forgiveness to be granted in the Sacrament of Confession. Jesus instituted this sacrament when He declared to His apostles, "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (Jn 20:23). The apostles handed on this authority to their successors through "the laying on of hands."⁷⁰ The people in Jesus' time marveled at the fact that God had given this authority "to men" (Mt 9:8).

In confession, God forgives the sinner by virtue of Christ's atoning work. However, if the man falls again into grave sin, "there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins" until he confesses his new sins (cf. Heb 10:26). That is why John reveals that God's forgiveness is conditional upon the sinner's willingness to seek that forgiveness in confession: "If we confess, then he will forgive our sins" (Cf. 1 Jn 1:9). When the sinner confesses his sins, God applies Christ's "sacrifice" to the sinner to forgive those "sins." After confession, Paul explains, "Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin" (Heb 10:18). By this Paul means that, when sin is forgiven, the efficacy of Christ's atoning work for that sinner has been accomplished. This is why Peter says that man "was cleansed from his old sins" (2 Pet 1:9).

When a person incurs finite punishment, he needs a finite satisfaction, that is, one of proportionate value, to be released. Although Christ is the source of all forgiveness and satisfaction, God requires man to play his part. Man, with finite power, can offer finite satisfaction to God to atone for his sins. These are the "spiritual sacrifices" we offer to God through Jesus Christ by virtue of our baptism.⁷¹ How can we be certain of this? We can be certain because we know that man can make satisfaction to another man (by an apology, a gift, or other type of sacrifice). Therefore, man can also make satisfaction to God, for God is more merciful than man.

When a person dies, his debt of punishment is not automatically discharged. This makes logical sense. If someone intentionally tortures and kills ten innocent people, and dies without repentance, he will be punished forever in hell. If the same person dies shortly after committing the murders, but repents on his deathbed, God forgives him of his eternal punishment, but he doesn't get off scot-free. He doesn't just waltz into heaven. He must make satisfaction for his grievous sins. God is infinite mercy, but He is also infinite justice. If the person did not make satisfaction during his earthly life, he will do so in purgatory. As Paul warns us, "Do you suppose you will escape the judgment of God?" (Rom 2:3).

Satisfaction and God's Anger

In Scripture, God reveals His will to restore the equity of justice by expressing His anger toward sin. Unlike human anger, which is often motivated by selfish pride and revenge, God's anger is simply His objective judgment of evil and sin. The scriptures do not attribute to God the quality of human anger because human anger is an emotion and God does not have emotions or passions. However, Scripture's descriptions of God's anger are not mere anthropomorphisms (that is, projecting human qualities onto God) because God really expresses His displeasure with and punishes sin. Thus, Scripture attributes anger to God analogically or metaphorically, meaning that divine anger is analogous to, but also different from, human anger.

Because God's anger is an expression of His divine judgment against sin, His anger is always ordered to the good. Sin violates God's justice and disregards His honor and holiness; it is an affront to His very nature. In fact, God was so opposed to the sin of Adam that He condemned the entire human race to death and condemnation (cf. Rom 5:12). To offset the infinite insult of Adam's sin, Jesus Christ voluntarily offered Himself in sacrifice to avert the Father's anger and satisfy His justice. This is why Scripture says that God "sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins."⁷²

Propitiation refers to the process by which God's anger is appeased and His justice satisfied through sacrifice. Scripture reveals how, throughout salvation history, God appeases His own anger by sending sinners temporal punishments. For example, through Ezekiel, God says, "Thus shall my anger spend itself, and I will vent my fury upon them and satisfy myself; and they shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken in my jealousy, when I spend my

fury upon them” (5:13). In this passage, God is not referring to the eternal penalty of hell; He’s referring to the temporal penalties that He imposed upon the Israelites for their sins, which included war, famine, robbery, animal attacks, desecration of holy places, dispersion, and death.⁷³ God sent these punishments to appease His anger (in other words, to satisfy His justice), so that God could later say, “So will I satisfy my fury on you, and my jealousy shall depart from you; I will be calm, and will no more be angry.”⁷⁴

The scriptures are also full of many examples where people propitiate God’s anger through acts of penance and sacrifice and mitigate or eliminate God’s ensuing punishments.⁷⁵ In the Old Testament, we see this with the sacrifices of Noah, Job, Moses, and David. In the New Testament, Christ Himself commands us to “bear fruits that befit repentance” (Lk 3:8). Thus, even though Jesus is the ultimate propitiation for sin, He requires us to appease God through our own sacrifices. This is why Paul can rejoice in completing what is lacking in Christ’s sufferings through his own sacrifices (Col 1:24). This is also why Paul can say that he will “gladly spend and be spent for your souls” (2 Cor 12:15) and that he is “already on the point of being sacrificed” (2 Tim 4:6). If we fail to make up for what we owe in this life through sacrifice, we will make satisfaction in the next life through suffering.

This means it is erroneous for Protestants to reject purgatory and the need for temporal punishments on the ground that Christ “paid the legal debt for our sins.” It’s true that if sin were a legal debt that Christ fully paid, purgatory would be unnecessary. But then so would hell. That is because God would not require one payment from Christ and a second payment from the sinner, both for the same sin. That would violate the law of justice. If Christ really satisfied the debt, there is no more debt to owe—and we all go to heaven.

Thus, Christ’s sacrifice is not an impersonal legal motion to a judge to pardon the criminal, but a personal, intimate plea to the Father to forgive the sinner. Christ’s atonement is about personal propitiation, not legal payment. It is about grace, not law, for Paul says, “you are not under law but under grace” (Rom 6:14).

Catholics also point out that Christ’s work is not a “legal transaction” because in order to be saved one must accept the “payment” through an act of faith. Scripture clearly teaches that God requires the sinner to have faith in Christ’s blood for it to benefit him (Rom 3:25). The problem, then, with the

Protestant understanding is that faith is not a dimension of law. One doesn't need to have "faith" in a criminal court judge to issue a punishment when the law is violated. A defendant's "faith" is irrelevant to his sentence. Rather, faith is a dimension of relationships, particularly within a family. This is why it is impossible to enter the New Covenant without faith (cf. Heb 11:6). Protestants have no explanation for why faith is required if Christ's atonement is a mere legal transaction. This is why Scripture always puts Christ's atoning work in the context of family, not law.

For example, Paul says that Christ was sent "to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons" (Gal 4:5). Paul also says, "He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ" (Eph 1:5) and "for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith" (Gal 3:26). Christ's atonement doesn't release defendants from a judge, but reconciles sons to their Father. This is the heart of the story of the Prodigal Son (cf. Lk 15:3-32). Because we are adopted sons of God, Paul says, "God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir" (Gal 4:6-7). We will say more about the Protestant view of the atonement later in this chapter.

Satisfaction as an Act of Mercy

God doesn't impose punishment upon sinners solely because it appeases His anger and is demanded by His justice. He also imposes temporal punishments upon us to further His work of saving our souls.

After all, God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."⁷⁶ Temporal punishment aids the sinner's reformation by moving the sinner to repentance, which is necessary for salvation. Justice aims not only at removing inequality already existing, but also safeguarding equality for the future. Since satisfaction is an act of justice, it is both punitive and rehabilitative. This means that God's requirement for satisfaction is an act of mercy as well.

Throughout the Old Testament, God sent many spiritual and material chastisements upon the Jews to move them to repentance. God does the same in the New Testament. Paul says, "For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation" (2 Cor 7:10). Thus, punishment is both penal and medicinal. It's like when someone gets physically sick for abusing his body through overeating or lack of exercise. Just as these warning signs move

people to “repent” of their unhealthy lifestyles and get back on the road to health, God sends spiritual chastisements to produce the same effect in our spiritual lives.

Temporal punishment is also medicinal because it helps us grow in holiness. As we will see below, our battle against evil and temptation is itself a temporal punishment for sin. After Paul refers to the Hebrews’ “struggle against sin,”⁷⁷ he says that God our Father “disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (Heb 12:10-11). Paul then says to “strive for . . . the holiness without which no one will see the Lord” (v.14).

Therefore this struggle against sin—which is a punishment for sin—helps produce the very holiness that we need to get to heaven. Paul directly connects our suffering for sin with our salvation. We are made perfect through suffering because Jesus, the pioneer of our salvation, was perfected in suffering.⁷⁸ Thus, in his letter to the Romans, Paul says we are sons of God, “provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him” (Rom 8:17). Again, Paul teaches that our glorification depends upon our sanctification through suffering—which will occur in this life or the next.

The story of the boy who broke his neighbor’s window gives us a good perspective. The boy’s father paid his neighbor the full price for the repair, but still required his son to earn money to contribute to the cause. This was painful for the boy but kept him in his father’s good graces. The discipline taught the boy the value of money and the meaning of hard work. It also taught the boy that there are consequences for his actions and that he should avoid breaking windows in the future. In short, the father’s discipline helped conform his son to his own likeness (a man who knows the value of money and hard work, and has respect for other people’s property). If the boy failed to make his contribution as his father required, he would be alienated from his father and his father’s full payment for the repair would avail him nothing.

As applied here, the father represents Jesus Christ and the son represents all of us. Christ paid the “full price” for our sins (by satisfying for the eternal punishment), but He requires us to contribute as well (by helping to satisfy for temporal punishment). Our sins have created an inequality of justice for which satisfaction is required. We have failed to recognize God’s holiness

and our sinfulness. Restoring us to God's friendship by suffering temporal punishments keeps us in God's good graces, helps us avoid sin, and conforms us to the image of His Son. If we fail to make satisfaction for our sins as God requires, we will be alienated from Him, and Christ's "payment" will avail us nothing.

Scripture teaches that God has predestined us to holiness precisely by being "conformed to the image of his son" (Rom 8:29). As Scripture says, "For the Lord disciplines him whom he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives. It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?" (Heb 12:6-7). Being conformed to Christ means suffering and dying with Him so that we will be raised to life with Him.⁷⁹ This is why Paul says, "while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus's sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh" (2 Cor 4:11). Just as Christ "learned obedience through what he suffered,"⁸⁰ we too must learn obedience by suffering. Though Christ was sinless, He suffered for our sins—and so too must we.

This means that we can use the sufferings of the present life to satisfy for our sins. This is why Paul tells us to "rejoice in our sufferings," for sufferings produce the endurance and character we need to make it to heaven (Rom 5:3). Even though the scourges of this life are not in our control, they acquire a satisfactory character if we accept them with the intention of making satisfaction. This is why faithful Catholics deal with suffering by saying, "Offer it up." In fact, offering our sufferings up to God for our sins does bring the sufferings within our power, since we bear them patiently and transform them into meritorious and satisfactory works. On the other hand, suffering borne impatiently and without faith in God will worsen a sinner's condition, meriting him neither satisfaction nor grace.

God's temporal punishments are merciful in another way: they serve as a warning to others not to fall into sin. Paul makes this clear in his First Letter to the Corinthians when he explains how the Jews were overcome by all kinds of evils because of their sins. After Paul recalls the Jews' punishment during the Exodus in the desert, he says, "Now these things are warnings for us, not to desire evil as they did" (10:6). A few verses later, after Paul recalls the Jews' punishment for idolatry and sexual immorality, he again says, "Now these things happened to them as a warning, but they were written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages has come" (v.11).

The Book of Proverbs also says, “The wicked man being scourged, the fool shall be wiser.”⁸¹ God imposes temporal punishments upon us to bring us—and others—to eternal salvation.

Examples of Temporal Punishment

Scripture provides many examples where God imposes temporal punishments upon people after forgiving their sins. For example, after Cain kills his brother Abel, God punishes Cain by cursing the ground that he regularly tilled. God reveals to Cain that when he now tilled the ground, it would no longer yield fruit (Gen 4:13). God also punishes Cain by making him a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth (v.13). Cain’s temporal punishment suited his crime of fratricide; he is punished by the very ground that received his brother’s blood. Yet the prideful Cain has the nerve to respond to God, “My punishment is greater than I can bear” (v.13).

We mentioned the sins of the people of Israel and the temporal punishments God sends them for those sins (war, famine, disease, and death). In addition to grumbling against God about their exile in the desert, the Jews’ gravest sin during the Exodus was worshiping the golden calf.⁸² God forgives the Jews’ sin of idolatry, but, in addition to killing some of them and afflicting them with a plague,⁸³ He also punishes them by prohibiting them from seeing the Promised Land.⁸⁴

That temporal punishment was also perfectly suited to the sin. The Israelites committed idolatry in the desert because they lacked patience and trust in God. In satisfaction for their sin, God punishes them in the desert, which requires them to have even more patience with and trust in God—another forty years worth!⁸⁵ In other words, God sought to restore the Israelites to the equality of justice by imposing a punishment upon them that was directly contrary to their will.

Most of us also know the story about King David. David sins against God by committing adultery with Bathseba and murdering Uriah the Hittite.⁸⁶ God forgives David’s sins, but punishes him by taking the life of the child he conceived in adultery, and by allowing his wives to be raped.⁸⁷ Because David took the innocent life of Uriah, God takes the innocent life of David’s child; because David committed adultery with Bathsheba, God has David’s wives commit adultery—two acts that are contrary to what David would have naturally wished.

Some Protestants argue that God kills David's child and has his wives violated, not to inflict temporal punishment upon him, but to redress the public scandal caused by his sin (vv.12-14). This argument is short-sighted. First, redressing public scandal, insofar as it warns the public not to commit the sin, is one of the reasons why God imposes temporal punishment. Secondly, that David wept, fasted, and laid prostrate on the ground for seven days and was forgiven by God demonstrates that David's actions made some satisfaction for his sin (vv.16-17). Finally, that David repented of his sin and wrote Psalms 32 and 51 shows that the temporal punishments he endured brought about his reformation.

In the New Testament, we see how the Corinthians sinned grievously by receiving the Eucharist unworthily. Paul warned them that receiving the body and blood of Christ in mortal sin would result in eternal punishment when he declared, "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord"; "For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself."⁸⁸

However, Paul also told the Corinthians that because of their sacrilege they were suffering temporal punishments of weakness and illness: "That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died" (1 Cor 11:30). Because the Corinthians abused the flesh of Christ in the Eucharist, God punished their own flesh with sickness and death.⁸⁹ This is another example of God's desire to restore the equality of justice between Himself and His creatures.

To the Romans, Paul reveals, "There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil" (Rom 2:9). The one who "does evil" commits the sin, and the "tribulation and distress" the sinner experiences are the punishments for his sin. Scripture makes it clear that sin (the act) and punishment (the guilt) are two different things. As we said above, every sin incurs the guilt of punishment, even after the sin is forgiven. God removes the "guilt of their sin" only after the sinner makes satisfaction.⁹⁰ Thus, after the angel touched Isaiah's lips with a hot, burning coal, he declared, "your guilt is taken away, and your sin forgiven" (Isa 6:7).

Temporal Punishment and Remnants of Sin

God does not limit temporal punishment to our actual sin. We also experience temporal punishments from the Original Sin of Adam. These

temporal penalties are often referred to as the “remnants of sin.” The remnants of sin include the soul’s spiritual inclination to sin, which the Church calls “concupiscence.” The remnants of sin refer also to the dispositions in the soul caused by the acts that precede actual sin (for example, greed or lust). Even after the sin is forgiven, these dispositions to sin remain. In fact, because actual sin stokes and kindles the concupiscence, these dispositions are often stronger after the will has given in to them. Scripture says, “he who despises small things will fail little by little” (Sir 19:1). This heightened proclivity to evil is a sure sign of a temporal punishment with which God has burdened our very nature.

To understand the remnants from actual sin, we may consider how God heals the sinner. Sometimes God does it suddenly, such as when He immediately made the leper clean⁹¹ or instantly cured the Gentile woman’s daughter (Mt 15:28). A great example occurs in the Gospel of Luke, when Jesus completely pardons the sinful woman (Lk 7:47-48). However, sometimes God heals the sinner in degrees. In Mark’s Gospel, we read how Jesus restores the blind man to imperfect sight when the man says, “I see men; but they look like trees, walking” (8:24). Then Jesus restores him perfectly, after which he “saw everything clearly” (v.25).

Jesus’s initial healing of the blind man signifies the forgiveness of his sin. The imperfect vision that remained after the forgiveness signifies the remnants of his sin. Even though the sinner is restored to grace, he retains the vestiges of his past sins, which need further healing. Both the debt of punishment and the remnants of sin—itsself a temporal punishment for sin—leave a stain on the soul that impedes its complete union with God until removed by God.

Scripture refers to the remnants of sin as a “stain” on the soul: “Though you wash yourself with lye and use much soap, the stain of your guilt is still before me, says the Lord God.”⁹² David implores God both to forgive his sins and wash away the stain of his sins.⁹³ We cannot appear before God with the stain of sin, for Scripture says Christ will present us “in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she [the Church] might be holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:27).

To understand the temporal penalties from Original Sin, we go back to the Book of Genesis. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God’s command in the Garden of Eden by listening to Satan and eating the forbidden fruit, God imposed upon them the penalty He had warned them about: “for in the day

that you eat of it you shall die” (Gen 2:17). This meant both physical and spiritual death for them and their progeny. As Paul says in his Letter to the Romans, “Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin . . . so death spread to all men because all men sinned” (5:12). Thus, death is not natural to man; it is a punishment for sin, “because God did not make death” (Wis 1:13).

The penalty of death had two components: eternal and temporal. The eternal punishment deprived Adam and Eve (and all of us) of eternal life with God. Had Adam and Eve persevered in their state of innocence and grace, God would have translated them from their earthly paradise into His heavenly paradise, which was represented in the Garden by the “tree of life” (3:22). But because of their sin, God banished them from His eternal paradise where they would no longer “live for ever.”

The temporal punishment also had two components: physical and spiritual. The physical component affected Adam and Eve’s bodies, which effects included suffering and death. Scripture enumerates some others. For example, the woman would be subject to weariness during pregnancy, to pain during childbirth, and to her husband’s will in obedience, even if it clashed with her own will.⁹⁴ The man would have difficulty in his labors because God had cursed the earth and caused it to bring forth thorns and thistles, making it physically difficult for him to earn his daily bread (vv. 17-19).

In Genesis 3:6-19 we see that the spiritual component— that is, the concupiscence—affected Adam and Eve’s souls, such that their flesh would be in conflict with their spirit. Here too Scripture enumerates specific effects. For example, the woman would desire to rule over her husband out of pride.⁹⁵ The man would be burdened by labor out of weakness of spirit. In seeing each other naked, both of them would experience confusion from their disordered carnal appetites. They would also be burdened with the reminder of their impending death. These physical and spiritual punishments would affect mankind’s very existence and its relationship with the God who created them.

Although these punishments were severe, God promised from the moment He imposed them to send a Savior to free men from the grip of Satan. In what is often called the Protoevangelium (which means “First Gospel”), God declares to the devil, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”⁹⁶ God would later reveal through His prophets that the

“enmity” would be His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, who would atone for the eternal penalty of sin, thereby restoring man to eternal life: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (Jn 3:16).

God did send His Son to restore us to life everlasting. But it should be obvious to any Christian that Jesus didn’t fully atone for the temporal punishments associated with Original Sin. After all, everyone experiences the effects of bodily weakness and spiritual concupiscence in their lives. It’s a daily struggle. We feel aches and pains in our bodies. We often find physical labor tedious and tiresome. We feel our sensual appetites playing havoc with our reason. We are wounded with self-love and pride. We know something is not quite right inside of us. This is because our soul is at war with our flesh: “For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would” (Gal 5:17).

Scripture is clear that we have inherited the temporal effects of Original Sin. In his Letter to the Romans, Paul says, “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man’s obedience many will be made righteous” (Rom 5:19). The word for “made” (from the Greek, *kathistemi*) refers to making or changing a character or nature to make it other than it was before.⁹⁷ This means that God has *infused in our nature* the sin and concupiscence of Adam. David also says, “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Ps 51:5). Although Christ has atoned for the eternal punishment of Adam’s sin, He has allowed these temporal punishments to remain, for the reasons we saw above.

This reality supports the Catholic teaching on baptism and grace. As we will further discuss below, just as God infuses into our nature Adam’s sin by generation, He infuses into our nature the grace of Jesus Christ by regeneration (cf. Tit 3:5). There is a correspondence between the actual change in our nature by sin (through natural birth) and the actual change in our nature by grace (through the supernatural rebirth of baptism). As Paul says, “where sin increased, grace abounded all the more” (Rom 5:20). This is why baptism is necessary for salvation. Jesus says, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mk 16:16). The Apostle Peter also says that baptism “saves you” through the grace of Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Pet 3:21).

Because the soul is infused with grace, sin acts upon it like a stain, as

Scripture teaches. We certainly understand how corporeal things are stained when they come into contact with certain other things. For example, a white cloth is stained when it comes into contact with mud. Even though the soul is spiritual and not corporeal, it can be stained as well. Why? Because the soul is illumined by the light of reason and the Divine light of God through grace. The effect of the remnants of sin is to cause a privation of this light of grace—a stain. Mortal sin expels sanctifying grace entirely from the soul and darkens it completely. This is why Scripture associates grace with light and sin with darkness.⁹⁸

When a person repents of his sin and God forgives him, God restores his soul to the state of grace. This is part of the salvation process. However, this doesn't mean that the person is automatically restored to the position he was in before he sinned. If we understand sin to be an irrational movement toward a mutable good, only a contrary movement can restore the original balance. As we have seen, this contrary movement is analogous to making satisfaction for sin. For example, if someone moves away from God by committing the sin of gluttony, fasting would be a contrary movement (a self-imposed temporal punishment) that can make satisfaction for the sin. The sin (gluttony) transgressed the order of divine justice, and the contrary movement (fasting) restores the sinner to the equality of justice. Again, he who has over-indulged his will must suffer something contrary to what he would wish in order to restore justice. If the sinner does not restore in this life the justice that God demands, he will do so in the next, which is purgatory.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul explains the effects of concupiscence in his own body:

I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. So then it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me (7:15-20).

Paul is describing the tension between the two faculties of the soul: The intellective and sensitive. The intellective faculty includes the reason and the will, while the sensitive includes the lower appetite or passions. As we have said when defining concupiscence, because of our wounded nature the lower appetite is inclined to sin (for example, gluttony, lust, anger, sloth). If the

intellective lacks due rule over the sensitive, the will produces the act of sin. Because all the soul's powers are rooted in the one essence of the soul, when one power intends to act (lower), another power is necessarily weakened or even impeded (higher). This is why the reason and will give way to sin. The intellective is overpowered by the sensitive.

Hence, sin originates within the soul, and it is chiefly in the will.⁹⁹ This is why Paul exhorts us to cleanse ourselves from “defilement of spirit” in order to achieve holiness.¹⁰⁰ Jesus says, “But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a man.”¹⁰¹ Jesus also says, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Mt 5:8). James further says, “each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin; and sin when it is full-grown brings forth death” (1:14-15).

Because sin originates in the soul, the soul must be purified of its inclinations to sin before entering the heavenly beatitude. As we have stated, these inclinations are not only from the concupiscence we have inherited from Adam, but are also produced in the soul through habitual actual sin. Even when a sin is forgiven, the sinful disposition caused by preceding acts can remain. Concupiscence, remnants of sin, and debts of temporal punishment all defile a man's soul, making purification necessary. These are objective conditions in the eyes of Almighty God; death doesn't change the state of the soul. If the soul is in grace but not completely freed from these impurities, God will complete the purification in purgatory.

Discipline Versus Punishment

In light of the clear teachings of Scripture, most Protestants acknowledge that God imposes temporal penalties upon us for our actual sins. Many also acknowledge that these temporal penalties include the soul's disordered inclinations resulting from Original Sin and the remnants of sin. However, in an effort to deny purgatory, Protestants contend that God doesn't impose these punishments on us as a satisfaction for sin, but as a “discipline” for saved Christians to increase their sanctification. If making satisfaction is unnecessary, then purgatory is unnecessary. Thus, Protestants view temporal penalties not as a means of retribution, but sanctification only. There are

several problems with this position.

The first and most obvious problem with this argument is that it is an arbitrary and semantic distinction. There is no difference between the terms “discipline” and “punishment,” either in their everyday usage or the way in which they are used in Scripture. When a father punishes a son, he disciplines him. He brings him back to the order of justice by imposing on him a “discipline” against his will. This discipline introduces what we have referred to as a “contrary movement” which restores the scales of equity. This is the retributive purpose for temporal punishment.

The Book of Proverbs equates “discipline” with “punishment” when it says, “Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you beat him with a rod, he will not die” (23:13). Paul also uses “discipline” and “punishment” as synonyms when he says, “do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor lose courage when you are punished by him” (Heb 12:5). In fact, Scripture also uses “discipline” to describe how God tests departed souls in the fire of His divine justice “like gold in the furnace”—a clear reference to purgatory.¹⁰²

Secondly, the examples of temporal punishment in Scripture reveal that they were not primarily to sanctify the Elect. They instead reveal an emphasis on the exacting nature of God’s punitive justice. For example, when God punishes the Israelites by preventing them from seeing the Promised Land, Scripture indicates that most of them were hardhearted unbelievers on the road to damnation.¹⁰³

Paul reveals that these Jews were “natural branches broken off from the root because of their unbelief.”¹⁰⁴ In fact, notwithstanding God’s temporal punishment for their idolatry and sexual immorality at Sinai, the Jews would later fall into the same sins at Beth-peor! (cf. Num 25:1-5). For their wickedness, God sends them a plague that kills twenty-four thousand. Hence, far from sanctifying the Israelites, God’s temporal punishment at Sinai would be a portend of their eternal punishment at Peor.¹⁰⁵

We also see how God imposes temporal penalties of weakness and illness on the members of the Corinthian church. The Corinthians had been causing drunken disturbances before celebrating the Lord’s Supper.¹⁰⁶ After Paul warns them that abusing the Eucharist results in eternal judgment, he says, “That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died” (1 Cor 11:30). Thus, Paul suggests that the temporal penalties of sickness, far from sanctifying the Corinthians, foreshadowed the eternal damnation of some of

them. Paul's repeated warnings about falling away from the faith also demonstrate that he is not exhorting "saved Christians to grow in holiness," but questioning whether they will be saved at all.¹⁰⁷

Thirdly, if temporal penalties dealt with God's "sanctifying discipline" but not His desire to restore the equality of justice, we would not expect to see Scripture connect "discipline" with "salvation." That is because God determines salvation or damnation under the auspices of His justice, whereas the Protestant notion of "discipline" is reserved for those who are already saved.

However, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, Paul says that "discipline" produces "holiness," which is necessary for salvation.¹⁰⁸ While Protestants would like to define "discipline" in Hebrews as the means of sanctification for already-saved Christians, Hebrews 12:10 puts "discipline" in a salvific context.¹⁰⁹ The Book of Proverbs also says, in the context of damnation, "He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly he is lost."¹¹⁰

In his letter to the Romans, we saw how Paul makes our salvation contingent upon our suffering when he says we are fellow heirs with Christ, "provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him" (Rom 8:17). The Greek for "in order" (*eiper*) is a conditional participle, which renders Paul's glorification contingent upon his sufferings.

In his Letter to the Philippians, Paul says, "that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead" (3:10-11). The Greek for "if possible" (*ei pos*) is a conditional phrase which means that Paul believes his suffering is a condition for salvation, not just a means for greater sanctity. Moreover, Paul's statement reveals that he doesn't view his salvation as guaranteed. If the Apostle Paul believed his salvation wasn't a certainty, how can any Christian not offend God by presuming his own salvation?

In his First Letter to the Corinthians, Paul reveals his own struggles with the flesh and says, "but I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified" (1 Cor 9:27). Again, Paul believes that his sufferings lead to salvation, and his failure to suffer with Christ leads to damnation. The Greek word for "disqualified" (*adokimos*) literally means "reprobate," or one who is to be condemned to hell. Paul uses the word five other times in the New Testament, and every time it refers to the eternally condemned.

For example, Paul uses *adokimos* to describe idolaters and sodomites,¹¹¹ evildoers,¹¹² rebels against God-given authority,¹¹³ corrupted unbelievers,¹¹⁴ and the accursed who are to burn in hell.¹¹⁵ In each case, Paul is describing people who God has allowed to perish in hell, not those whom He is sanctifying for heaven. Even though Paul was converted directly by Jesus Christ and was an instrument of God's revelation, he still believed his damnation was a possibility if he fell from grace. Contrary to what many Protestants believe, Scripture is replete with passages revealing that currently "saved" Christians can lose their salvation through sin.¹¹⁶

This also means that Scripture does not distinguish between sanctification and salvation.¹¹⁷ To the contrary, Scripture uses these two words to describe the same thing: a soul in a state of grace. For example, in his first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul says, "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from immorality . . . not in the passion of lust like heathen who do not know God . . . because the Lord is an avenger in all these things" (4:3-6). If committing these mortal sins (immorality, lust) leads to damnation, then avoiding these sins leads to salvation. Hence, Paul uses sanctification as a synonym for salvation.¹¹⁸

The point is this: If the Protestant's premise about the nature of suffering in this life is wrong, then his conclusion that there is no suffering in the next life is wrong as well. If the Protestant mischaracterizes the purpose of earthly suffering, he has no basis to deny the reality of purgatorial suffering. If suffering produces holiness, which is necessary for heaven as Scripture teaches, then suffering cannot be limited to non-salvific sanctification or the accrual of heavenly rewards. As Scripture teaches, suffering—whether it's called "chastisement," "discipline," or "punishment"—is the vehicle that restores man to the equality of God's justice, appeases God's anger, and moves man to salvation through repentance.

Grace and the Salvation Process

As we have alluded to, most Protestants reject the doctrine of purgatory because of a faulty understanding of how God justifies (saves) sinners. Both Catholics and Protestants agree that justification is the process whereby man, moved by God's grace, accepts God's forgiveness and righteousness. Being in a state of justification means we are in a right relationship with God, making us children of God and heirs of heaven. Hence, Catholics and

Protestants agree that justification and salvation are the same thing. The difference, however, between Catholic and Protestant theology is how a person becomes justified (saved). This difference affects not only how one views the status of the sinner in this life, but also in the afterlife (which means it affects one's view of purgatory).

As we learned in the Preface, the doctrine of purgatory invokes a broad range of theological territory. If one theological presupposition is wrong, the entire theology unravels. False premises lead to false conclusions. We will close this chapter by examining in more detail the most common Protestant rebuttal to purgatory.¹¹⁹ Although a thorough examination is beyond the scope of this book, addressing the basic premises of the Protestant position will allow us to see the errors in their rejection of purgatory and the truth of the Catholic, biblical position.

“Faith Alone” and “Imputed Righteousness”

We have already mentioned how many Protestants view Christ's atonement as a legal transaction. We will now explore this concept in greater depth, and we will begin our analysis with an irony: Protestants reject purgatory, in part, based on a Scripture verse in Revelation that Catholics use in support of purgatory. We have already seen this verse: “But nothing unclean shall enter it, nor any one who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life” (21:27).

Because we are sinners and nothing unclean can enter heaven, the Protestant concludes that we can never possess heaven-worthy righteousness on our own. Because God demands perfect righteousness and we are imperfect, the righteousness required for heaven must come from outside of us. Therefore, the Protestant concludes, to make us worthy of heaven God credits us with Christ's righteousness—the righteousness that Christ displayed during His Passion. According to this view, the “crediting” of Christ's righteousness to the sinner's account is not unlike an accountant making a credit entry on his books. Christ's sacrificial death is viewed as a legal or forensic transaction, and not a personal propitiation.

To receive the crediting (or imputing) of Christ's righteousness, the Protestant says that the sinner simply needs to believe that Jesus died for his sins. Since there is no work a sinner can do to make himself righteous, the sinner accepts the righteousness of Christ's atoning work by that faith alone.

After this solitary profession of faith in Jesus Christ, God credits the sinner's ledger and legally declares him to be justified (saved). Upon receiving his justification, the now-saved sinner transitions into a new phase of Christian life called sanctification. In this phase, the sinner lives a life of prayer, penance, and good works, a life that demonstrates his once-for-all justification and builds up his rewards in heaven. Hence, in Protestant theology, justification (salvation) is a one-time event, and sanctification is the ongoing process that follows justification.

In the state of justification, the Protestant contends that when God evaluates our lives, He sees only Christ's righteousness (which has been credited), and not our sinfulness (which has been covered). It follows that, when we die, being "covered" with Christ's righteousness makes us automatically pure in God's sight and worthy of the Beatific Vision. God sees no "stain of sin" or "debt of punishment," but only the righteousness of Christ, which He credited to us at our justification. Thus, at death, God needs only to determine our level of rewards for the deeds we have accomplished during the sanctification phase. This Protestant construct eliminates any need for purgatory.

At first blush, this theory seems reasonable. After all, when we look critically at ourselves, we cannot imagine being sufficiently righteous to merit heaven. If God truly judges every thought, word, and deed, how could we possibly be found worthy of being admitted into God's dwelling place? Isn't it easier to let Christ be our substitute? Isn't it easier to let "faith alone" be our judge; for the deeds we have done in this life to determine only the reward we will receive in heaven, and not our eternal salvation or damnation? While this position seems sensible, there is a reason why no Christian ever heard of it until the Protestant revolt in the sixteenth century.¹²⁰

First, when we read Revelation 21:27, there is nothing about "imputed righteousness" in the verse. The Apostle John equates being "unclean" with those who practice "abomination or falsehood" (v.27), not with those who haven't been appropriated Christ's righteousness by their faith. In the same chapter, John excludes from heaven "murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars." (v.8)¹²¹ In other words, John is revealing that one is "unclean" based upon what he does during his life, not upon whether he has received a legal imputation of Christ's righteousness. God judges what the person actually is, not what he appears to be when "covered" by the righteousness of Christ.

Secondly, Catholics agree with Protestants that there is nothing we can do by our own actions to deserve eternal life. We cannot rid ourselves of the title “unclean” by our own efforts. Because of our sinfulness, neither our faith nor our works can be sufficiently pleasing to God to merit heaven. While this might surprise many Protestants, the Catholic Council of Trent, the same council that defined purgatory, dogmatically declared: “If anyone says that man can be justified before God by his own works, whether done by his own natural powers or through the teaching of the law, without divine grace through Jesus Christ, let him be anathema.”¹²²

This is precisely where the Protestant position breaks down. Why?

Because, on the one hand, it requires the sinner to have faith to merit Christ’s imputed righteousness, and on the other hand, it says that there is nothing the sinner can do to please God. Which is it, faith or nothing? This is a blatant inconsistency in the Protestant position. If our works cannot please God, then our faith cannot please God either. If our works are imperfect because of sin and, thus, cannot merit heaven, then our faith is imperfect as well. If our faith is imperfect, then that faith cannot merit a crediting of Christ’s righteousness, or any consideration from God at all. How do we reconcile this contradiction? The Scriptures and the Church have the answer, and the answer is grace.

When we are born into the world, because of the sin of Adam we lack a gracious relationship with God. That is, we lack grace, which is an unmerited sharing in the life of God. As we have seen, on account of Original Sin, we have inherited both the eternal punishment for Adam’s sin (hell), as well as the temporal penalties for his sin, which are both physical (weakness, death) and spiritual (concupiscence). As Paul says, we are born under the condemnation “of the law.”¹²³ In this state of condemnation, there is absolutely nothing we can do, whether it be faith or works, to merit anything from God.

When we are “born again” in baptism, God infuses sanctifying grace into our souls.¹²⁴ This grace simultaneously justifies and sanctifies us, thereby restoring us to a gracious relationship with God. Paul says we are “justified by his grace” through the “washing of regeneration” which God “pours out upon us.”¹²⁵ Paul also tells the Corinthians the salvific effects of their baptism when he says, “you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.”¹²⁶ Paul likely uses the word “wash” for baptism because he heard the same

terminology used at his own baptism, when Ananias told Paul, “Rise and be baptized, and wash away your sins.”¹²⁷

Through the infusion of grace at baptism, God washes away Original Sin and the eternal penalty of sin by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ (although God, as we have seen, allows the temporal penalties to remain). Baptism also gives us the theological virtues of “faith,” “hope,” and “charity,” which God has “poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”¹²⁸ Baptism cleanses the interior of the person because it makes “our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb 10:22). This is why Peter preached, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins” (Acts 2:38).

In this state of grace, which commences at baptism, God no longer deals with us as sons of Adam, but as His sons through Jesus Christ. Since we are His sons, God can be pleased with our faith and works because that is how a Father interacts with His children.¹²⁹ Scripture is replete with verses revealing how we are able to “please” God by our efforts when in a state of grace.¹³⁰ Paul says, “So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him” (2 Cor 5:9) and that we must “lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him” (Col 1:10). Paul further says, “we speak not to please men, but to please God who tests our hearts” (1 Thess 2:4). John also says, “We receive from him whatever we ask because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him” (1 Jn 3:22).

As we persevere in the virtues of faith, hope, and charity, which we received in baptism, God increases the measure of sanctifying grace in our souls. The process of infusion is ongoing: the more grace we receive from God, the more pleasing we are to Him. Grace strengthens our power to do God’s will and increases our merit and favor before Him. Hence, grace is not only the life of God within us, but a “divine substance” that God infuses into the soul. Grace has real existence, which is why it is sometimes called “ontic” grace (related to the word “ontology” which is the study of being or existence). The scriptures reveal many examples where grace is described in terms of a measurable quantity.¹³¹

We recall Paul’s statement in Romans 5:19: “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man’s obedience many will be made righteous.”¹³² Just as we were made sinners by the infusion of Original Sin (through the natural generation of conception), we are also made

righteous by the infusion of grace (through the supernatural regeneration of baptism). Based on the comparative clauses of Romans 5:19, we must conclude that there is an objective change in our nature if we are to maintain exegetical equilibrium in the verse. If we truly have been infected with Original Sin (and we see that we are by the concupiscence of the soul), then we truly are made righteous by grace through Jesus Christ.

Paul also says, “If, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ” (Rom 5:17). Again, Paul says that the remedy for Original Sin is to receive grace and righteousness through Christ, not merely to be covered by it through some legal imputation. What we receive, we possess. God gives this grace to us in baptism, and we must cooperate with this grace to obtain “acquittal and life for all men” (v.18). This acquittal refers to both the eternal and temporal punishments that we have inherited from “the one man’s trespass” (vv.17-18).

“It Was Credited to Him as Righteousness”

Let’s recall why we began this discussion. If God sees only the righteousness of Christ when he judges the sinner upon his death, then, as we have stated, purgatory would be unnecessary. However, if God doesn’t merely “cover” the person with Christ’s righteousness, then the Protestant cannot object to the Catholic doctrine on those grounds. Further, if God doesn’t see Christ’s alien righteousness when He judges the sinner, then God must evaluate the sinner’s own righteousness, for nothing unclean shall enter heaven. Since most of us do not achieve the perfect righteousness God demands for heaven—even when faithfully living the life of grace—well, that’s where purgatory comes in.

So how do Protestants attempt to support the theory of “imputed righteousness” by “faith alone”? They attempt to demonstrate it primarily from the biblical account of Abraham. In the book of Genesis, we learn that God establishes a covenant with Abraham and his descendants by promising to give them land and prosperity.¹³³ Because Abraham and his wife Sara are elderly and childless, Abraham laments to God that he has no natural descendants and that his servant Eliezer will have to be his heir. God responds by revealing to Abraham, “This man shall not be your heir; your

own son shall be your heir” (Gen 15:4).

Notwithstanding the perceived improbability of Abraham and Sara conceiving a child, Scripture says about Abraham: “And he believed the Lord; and he reckoned [credited] it to him as righteousness” (Gen 15:6). Paul confirms in his Letter to the Romans that Abraham was justified at this moment in time when he writes, “For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.’ Now to one who works, his wages are not reckoned as a gift but as his due.”¹³⁴ Does this account support the doctrine of “imputed righteousness”? Let us see what the scriptures say.

Paul does not say Abraham was justified by “faith alone.” We also note that Scripture never says a man is justified by “faith alone.” In fact, the only time the phrase “faith alone” is used in Scripture is in the Epistle of James, when James declares that “man is justified by works and not by faith alone” (Jas 2:24). Thus, Scripture teaches that faith, by itself, is insufficient to save the sinner, and that works must be added to faith. Scripture also teaches that we need a certain kind of faith to receive salvation, and that is a faith which is accompanied by obedience,¹³⁵ love,¹³⁶ and repentance.¹³⁷ For example, Paul refers to “the obedience of faith,” requires a “faith working through love,” and exhorts us to have “repentance to God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.”¹³⁸

Furthermore, when Paul refers to “works” in Romans 4:2, he is referring to works that attempt to obligate God, and thus are performed outside of His grace.¹³⁹ That is why Paul connects “works” with “wages” (v.4). He is warning the Romans not to treat God like an employer who owes them, but like a Father who loves them. An employee does not need to have faith in an employer, for the law obligates the employer to pay for services rendered.

However, God is not obligated to pay His creatures for their work because, as we have seen Paul say, “who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” (Rom 11:35). This is why Paul tells us that “the wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23). That being said, Paul reveals to the Romans that now, as baptized Christians, they have a special relationship with God based on grace, not law.¹⁴⁰ In this new relationship, God will reward them for their works if they have faith in Him as their Father. This is because a good father rewards His children out of love, not legal obligation (cf. Heb 6:10; 11:6).

Finally, and perhaps most fundamentally, the Protestant assumes that what

God “credits” to Abraham He doesn’t actually see in Abraham. In other words, God declares that Abraham has changed but he hasn’t really changed. To use the accounting analogy, the Protestant essentially argues that God makes a phony credit entry on the books. The problem with this position is obvious: it infringes upon the integrity and holiness of God who cannot lie or deceive us (cf. Tit 1:2; Heb 6:18). If a criminal judge doesn’t pretend about the actual status of a defendant, why would the Supreme Judge pretend about the actual status of a sinner?

The original biblical language also assists us in this analysis. The Greek word for “credited” is *logizomai*. This word is used forty times in the New Testament and has various shades of meaning including “accepted,” “considered,” “counted,” and “reckoned.”¹⁴¹ Whenever the word is applied to a person, it almost invariably refers to an observation of something that actually exists in or about the person. It never refers to what a person is lacking.

When Scripture says God was not “counting [*logizomai*] their trespasses against them,” they really had trespasses that God was willing to forgive (Cf. 2 Cor 5:19). When Scripture says Abraham “considered [*logizomai*] that God was able to raise men even from the dead,” Abraham really believed God could do it (Cf. Heb 11:19). This means that when God “credited” [*logizomai*] Abraham with righteousness, Abraham really was righteous, and God was simply affirming what He saw in Abraham. If God, then, is judging Abraham’s own righteousness, the Protestant doctrine of “imputed righteousness” is erroneous.

Some Protestants argue that God imputes Christ’s righteousness to us because God imputes our sins to Christ on the Cross. Protestants may get this interpretation from Paul’s statement to the Corinthians that God “made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor 5:21). This interpretation is a grave error. First, the Church and all of the early Fathers always interpreted Paul’s statement to mean that Christ was made a propitiatory offering for sin, but did not become sin itself. The Protestant interpretation is heretical because the divine Person of Jesus Christ could never assume anything sinful or evil. As Paul says, “what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial?” (2 Cor 6:14-15).

Note also that Scripture never uses *logizomai* in reference to Christ, but to man only. This means that the Protestant interpretation is not supported by

Scripture. Just because Romans 5:19 teaches that we were infused with Adam's sin does not mean that Christ was infused with our sin. We were infused with Adam's sin because of Adam's disobedience, and we are freed of Adam's sin because of Christ's obedience, that is, Christ's freewill offering of Himself for our sins. This is how we become (not how we are imputed with) the "righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:21).

Abraham's Justification

Paul's detailed account of Abraham's justification in his letters to the Romans and Hebrews further demonstrates the Catholic position: justification is an ongoing process of living out God's grace, not a one-time event of receiving Christ's alien righteousness. In describing Abraham's justification, Paul never speaks about a righteousness that is extrinsic to Abraham. Instead, Paul speaks very forcefully about Abraham's own intrinsic righteousness, which he developed over the course of his life as God tested him with severe trials, to which Abraham responded with the help of God's grace.

For example, Paul recalls how in Genesis 12 Abraham received the grace of salvation when he embarked on his journey to the Promised Land, looking for the city "whose builder and maker is God."¹⁴² Even though in Genesis 12 Abraham had salvific and justifying faith, Paul says that Abraham was also "credited with righteousness" in Genesis 15:6, twenty-five years later, when he "believed against hope" that God would make him a father of many nations.¹⁴³ Paul says, "He did not weaken in faith" when God promised him a son in his elder years, even though his body "was as good as dead because he was about a hundred years old, or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb."¹⁴⁴

Paul further recalls Abraham's most severe test, years later, in Genesis 22, where God asks Abraham to slay Isaac his son, for he believed "that God was able to raise men even from the dead."¹⁴⁵ James says Abraham was "credited with righteousness" at this moment as well, in Genesis 22, just as he was twenty-five years earlier in Genesis 15:6.¹⁴⁶ This, again, proves that Scripture teaches justification is a progressive development, not a static event. God continues to "credit" us with righteousness as we continue to do righteous deeds by the power of His grace. After Paul recounts all of these events in Abraham's life, he concludes by saying, "That is why his faith was 'reckoned to him as righteousness'" (Rom 4:22).

The story of Abraham shows us that salvation is a process of growing in grace and righteousness, not a one-time event of receiving it by legal declaration. God works with us through His grace and continues to draw out faith, hope, and charity over our lifetime through trials and tests. This He does to obtain satisfaction for our sin, purify our hearts, and prepare our soul for heaven because “nothing unclean shall enter it.” When we please God by living holy lives in grace, we “become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor 5:21). As the Psalmist says, “The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness.”¹⁴⁷ Just as we share in Christ’s righteousness by grace, we also “share his holiness” (Heb 12:10). This is why the Apostle John can say, “He who does right is righteous, as he is righteous.”¹⁴⁸

Thus, when God “credits” Abraham and anyone else with righteousness, it means that God looks at our very being and sees the internal quality of our own righteousness within us. God peers into the soul of man to evaluate his level of perfection and how he has used, or abused, grace. As Scripture teaches, God “works with us” by His grace to help us achieve the holiness necessary for heaven, and this is a life-long process.¹⁴⁹ If we persevere in grace to the end of our lives as Abraham did, we will receive the reward of salvation.¹⁵⁰ As Peter says, we will confirm our “call and election.”¹⁵¹ This is why Paul tells us that we must “follow the example of the faith” of Abraham (Rom 4:12). This is the perfection that God demands of us to merit eternal life.

How does this relate to purgatory? Just as God peers into our souls during life, He judges the condition of the soul at death. As He granted grace to the worthy soul during life, so He grants glory to that worthy soul at death. The presence or absence of grace in the soul at death determines our destination after death. If we die with sanctifying grace in our souls, we go to heaven. If we die in a state of grace but our soul is stained (with venial sin or the debt of punishment), we go to purgatory before heaven. Purgatory is an objective necessity because the soul’s condition at death is an objective reality—and this is what God looks at when He judges us.

David’s Justification

The story of David teaches us the same thing about justification, but with additional insights. Many years before David commits the mortal sins of adultery and murder, God describes David as “a man after my heart.”¹⁵² No

one else in Scripture is described in this lofty way. David had “the Spirit of the Lord,” wrote inspired Scripture (the Psalms), and enjoyed a very intimate relationship with God.¹⁵³ In a word, David was as “saved” as they come. Many Protestants believe that no one with such an incredible relationship with God could possibly fall from grace. But David did.

After David commits his sins of adultery and murder, he confesses them to God and God forgives him. In thanksgiving to God, David writes Psalms 32 and 51 about God’s merciful forgiveness. In his letter to the Romans, Paul refers to David as “ungodly” while he was in mortal sin (4:5), but then describes David’s repentance as a moment in which God “reckoned [credited] righteousness” to him (vv.6-7). In other words, God evaluated David’s righteousness by examining his soul, and David recognized the same when he cried in repentance, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.”¹⁵⁴

Given David’s relationship with God prior to his committing mortal sins, we can conclude that his confession of these sins was not the first time God “credited him with righteousness.” In fact, David had confessed other sins to God prior to his sins against Bathseba and Uriah, which we see in Psalm 25: “Remember not the sins of my youth, or my transgressions; Consider my affliction and my trouble, and forgive all my sins” (vv.7,18). This tells us that David must have also been “credited with righteousness” at these moments as well, prior to falling into mortal sin and being “credited” with righteousness again in Romans 4:5.¹⁵⁵

Paul’s analysis in Romans 4 teaches us that David’s salvation was a process that involved being in a state of righteousness, followed by being in a state of mortal sin, followed by repenting and being restored to righteousness once again. God continued to work with David by giving him grace and perfecting his righteousness through repentance. As we recall from the Apostle John, if we confess our sins, then our faithful Lord will forgive them and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (cf. 1 Jn 1:9). This means that each time we repent of our sins, God restores us to grace and “credits” us with righteousness (that is, He sees the righteousness within us by His grace).

Paul’s evaluation of David in Romans 4 also gives us two other important facts. First, righteous people in the state of grace can fall from salvation, through sin. This happened even to David, a man with the Spirit of God and an instrument of His divine revelation. Second, faith alone is insufficient for salvation, because after David committed mortal sin, he still had faith in God,

but had to be restored by repenting and making satisfaction for his sins. If David did not repent, he would have been condemned, notwithstanding his faith in God. Both these truths are in clear contradiction to mainline Protestant theology.

More on the Salvation Process

Paul describes salvation as a process elsewhere in Scripture. For example, Paul writes, “Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day” (2 Cor 4:16). Our “inner nature” refers to our soul, which is “renewed” by grace as we persevere in lives of charity. Paul also says that we “are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” (2 Cor 3:18). Being “changed into His likeness” refers to the inner man, and the merits we receive in this life are translated into the glory of the next.

Because salvation is a process, Paul says we are “being saved” (present tense) over the course of our lives.¹⁵⁶ This refers to our earthly journey as we persevere in God’s grace. Paul also says that “we will be saved” (future tense).¹⁵⁷ This refers to our heavenly journey when we pass from this life to the next. When John says that “no murderer has eternal life abiding in him,” this “eternal life” refers to the sanctifying grace in the soul, not the vision of God in heaven (1 Jn 3:15). “Eternal life” commences with the infusion of grace at baptism, and is actualized in eternity with the Beatific Vision.

If Christ died once, how is salvation a process? It is a process because Christ’s atoning work is a process. Scripture makes this truth very clear. Even though Jesus died “once for all,” He also appears “once for all” in heaven to intercede for us—for the purpose of saving us.¹⁵⁸ Paul says, “Consequently he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them” (Heb 7:25). Paul also connects justification with Christ’s ongoing mediation before the Father when he writes: “It is God who justifies; who is to condemn? Is it Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us?” (Rom 8:33-34).

If Christ’s work is “finished,” as most Protestants contend, then why does Jesus continue to intercede for us to save us? Aren’t we already saved by “faith alone”? Doesn’t any kind of intercession take away from “the finished work of the cross”? If we really have been imputed Christ’s righteousness by

a one-time profession of faith in His work, then Jesus' heavenly intercession is superfluous. If "faith alone" were sufficient to apply the merits of Christ's atoning death to the sinner, then these verses wouldn't make any sense. No, these verses about Christ's ongoing intercession make sense only when we understand that salvation is a process.

Christ continually intercedes for us because we continually need God's grace for salvation. Christ secures this grace for us by appearing before his Father as "a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain" (Rev 5:6). Although He died once, Jesus our High Priest enters heaven with "something to offer" by "taking his own blood" into the "Holy Place."¹⁵⁹ Hence, Jesus makes His "sacrifice for sin" eternally present before the throne of His Father, and the Father responds by granting grace to His children who need it. After Paul describes Jesus' heavenly priesthood, he says, "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb 4:16).

When is this time of need? It is for our entire lives. Why? Because salvation is a process. We need God's grace to master concupiscence, to renounce our sin, and to pay the debts of temporal punishment we owe to God. We need grace to confess our sins so that there "remains a sacrifice for sin" to be forgiven of them (Heb 10:26). We need grace to "share in his holiness," which is necessary for eternal life. We need grace to persevere in faith, hope, and charity to the end of our lives. We need grace to live like Abraham lived. In short, we need grace to be perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect.

For most of us, spiritual perfection is rarely reached this side of heaven. Habitual venial sin, unconquered sinful inclinations, and debts of satisfaction for sin stain the soul and bar our entry into heaven where nothing defiled can exist. Nevertheless, if we die in God's grace but fail to attain perfection in this life, God in His mercy has provided purgatory as the means of attaining the necessary perfection in the next. We will analyze the biblical basis for the doctrine of Purgatory in more detail in the next chapter

65 Wis 11:20; cf. Prov 16:11; Isa 27:8; Mt 7:2

66 Isa 30:18.

67 We say "willful" because avoiding sins in the future involves the free will's refusal to sin. Unlike the body, which can be preserved from sickness by removing the causes of sickness, the free will is not necessarily preserved from spiritual sickness (sin) even when the causes of sin are removed (through punishment). Similarly, the free will can choose to avoid sin even when the causes of sin are present (e.g., internal or external temptations).

- 68 This is the philosophy of the Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas.
- 69 Our ability to make satisfaction for sin comes from God's grace and not our own initiative. This means that our works of satisfaction are really God's works by virtue of His grace working within us (cf. Phil 2:13).
- 70 Cf. Acts 6:5-6; 13:2-3; 14:22; 1 Tim 4:14; 5:22; 2 Tim 1:6.
- 71 See 1 Pet 2:5; see also Rom 12:1; Phil 4:18; 2 Tim 4:6; Heb 13:15.
- 72 1 Jn 4:10 (DR); see also Heb 2:17; 1 Jn 2:2 (DR).
- 73 Cf. Ezek 5:10-17; 6:4; 7:22; Isa 10:16.
- 74 16:42; cf. Ezek 21:17.
- 75 Job 42:7-10; Gen 18:22-33; Ex 4:24-26; 32:14; Num 25:11-13; Deut 9:18-19; 1 Chron 21:14-27.
- 76 1 Tim 2:4. Aquinas teaches that God antecedently (absolutely) wills all men to be saved, prior to considering the whole of humanity and the good of the universe; and, consequently (simply) wills to permit some men to be damned because their damnation reflects God's avenging justice which is a good that would not be communicated His goodness to humanity in the greatest measure, which is done by manifesting both His mercy and His justice, and not His mercy alone
- 77 Heb 12:4.
- 78 Cf. Heb 2:10; 12:2
- 79 Cf. Rom 6:5; 2 Tim 2:11; see also 2 Cor 1:5; 1 Pet 2:21.
- 80 Heb 8:5.
- 81 19:25 (DR).
- 82 Ex 32:4-8.
- 83 Ex 32:28,35.
- 84 Num 14:21-23,30,32,35. Out of a million Jews who crossed the Red Sea, God allowed only Joshua and Caleb to see the Promised Land.
- 85 Cf. Num 14:34. God chooses the temporal punishment of forty years to coincide with the Israelites forty days of spying out the Promised Land, which showed their lack of faith and trust in God.
- 86 2 Sam 12:9-10.
- 87 2 Sam 12:14,18-19
- 88 1 Cor 11:27,30.
- 89 Death is a temporal punishment because we will be resurrected from the dead (2 Macc 7:14; 12:43; Dan 12:2; Mt 22:23,28,30-31; Mk 12:23; Lk 14:14; Lk 20:27,33,35-36; Jn 5:29; 11:24-25; Acts 24:15,21; Rom 6:5; 1 Cor 15:12-13,21,42; Phil 3:11; 2 Tim 2:18; Heb 6:2; 11:35; Rev 20:5-6)..
- 90 Jer 33:8; see also Ps 32:5; Isa 27:9; Jer 2:22; 30:14-15; Ezek 18:24; Hos 12:8
- 91 Cf. Mt 8:3.
- 92 Jer 2:22; cf. Jos 22:17.
- 93 Cf. Ps 51:1-2,7,9-10.
- 94 Cf. Gen 3:16. This punishment did not concern the husband's headship over the family, for he was the head of his wife and children even before the Fall (see Eph 5:22-24; Col 3:18; Tit 2:5; and 1 Pet 3:1-2).
- 95 The Hebrew word for "desire" (*teshuqah*) can mean a desire to rule over someone, and not a desire of affection.
- 96 Gen 3:15. The Fathers of the Church teach that the "enmity" (as well as the seed) is Christ and the "woman" is the Blessed Virgin Mary. In fact, the Hebrew in Genesis 3:15 demonstrates that it will be the woman—Mary—who will crush the head of the devil at the end of the world (this is because the singular pronoun *hu*, which is often translated as "he," relates back to the noun *ha-isha* which means "woman"). The Latin Vulgate also says "*ipsa conteret*" ("she shall bruise
- 97 Note similar usages in Heb 7:28; Jas 4:4; 2 Pet 1:8.
- 98 Cf. Mt 6:23; Lk 1:79; Jn 1:5; 3:19; 8:12; 12:35,46; Rom 2:19; 13:12; 1 Cor 4:5; 2 Cor 4:6; 6:14; Eph 5:8,11; 1 Thess 5:4-5; 1 Pet 2:9; 1 Jn 1:5-6; 2:8-9,11.
- 99 Because God loves all things He has created (Wis 11:24) but hates sin (Wis 14:9) demonstrates that

- God is not the cause or author of sin.
- 100 Cf. 2 Cor 7:1.
- 101 Mt 15:18-19; see also Mk 7:21.
- 102 Cf. Wis 3:1-7.
- 103 Cf. Isa 10:22; Mic 2:12; Rom 9:25; 11:5,14.
- 104 Cf. Rom 11:17-23. The root (Greek, *rhiza*) refers to Jesus Christ and not “Israel” as some Jewish apologists contend (see Jn 15:6; Rom 15:12; Rev 5:5).
- 105 This does not mean temporal punishments are a sign of future eternal punishment. To the contrary, we should view temporal punishments as a blessing from God, who desires our purification in this life rather than in the next. It is only when man fails to repent of his mortal sins that he incurs eternal punishment.
- 106 Cf. 1 Cor 11:18-21.
- 107 Cf. 1 Cor 3:17; 4:5; 6:8-9; 9:27-10:6,11-12; 15:1-2; 2 Cor 5:20-6:2; 11:3; 12:2-13:5.
- 108 12:10. Cf. Heb 12:14. Moreover, it is clear that Paul doesn’t view the Hebrews’ salvation as guaranteed as almost fifty percent of the book is devoted to warning them that they can fall from their salvation.
- 109 12:10. The Greek supports this conclusion. The word for discipline (from the Greek, *paideia*) in verses 5-7 and 9 (regarding disciplining sons) is the word Paul uses in verse 10 (regarding discipline that produces the holiness needed for salvation).
- 110 5:23. See also Prov 15:10; 19:18; Jer 7:28.
- 111 Rom 1:28
- 112 2 Cor 13:5-7.
- 113 2 Tim 3:8.
- 114 Tit 1:15-16.
- 115 Heb 6:8.
- 116 Cf. Mt 7:21-23; 10:22,28,33; 24:12-13; Mk 13:22; Lk 8:13; Jn 12:47-48; 15:6; Acts 13:43,46; 20:29-30; Rom 2:6; 11:20-22; 1 Cor 4:5; 10:11-12; 15:1-2; 2 Cor 5:20-6:2; 11:3; 12:21-13:5; Eph 5:5-6; Col 1:21-23; 1 Thess 4:1-8; 2 Thess 2:13-15; 1 Tim 4:1; 5:15; 6:10; 2 Tim 1:15; 2:12,17; 4:10,16; Heb 2:1; 3:1,6,12-14; 4:1,11-14; 6:4-6,11-12; 10:26-27,35-38; 12:1-3,14-17,25,29; Jas 1:21-22; 1 Pet 4:18; 5:8; 2 Pet 1:9; 2:20-22; 3:14-17; 1 Jn 2:24-26,28; 2 Jn 8; Rev 2:5,10,16,23,26; 3:3,11,16,21; 16:15.
- 117 If “sanctification” simply referred to a saved person’s accrual of rewards, one would expect the word “sanctification” to chronologically follow Scripture’s use of “salvation” or “justification.” Instead, the only time a Scripture verse mentions justification/salvation along with sanctification, the word “sanctification” precedes “justification.” See 1 Cor 6:11.
- 118 Paul does the same thing in Acts 20:32, Rom 6:22, 1 Cor 1:30 and 2 Thess 2:13. Paul also says one can fall from sanctification (salvation) in Heb 10:29.
- 119 It must be noted that there are many different views within Protestantism regarding how God saves man. We have chosen to focus on “faith alone” and “imputed righteousness” because they are the most common positions Protestants use to deny the Catholic doctrine of purgatory.
- 120 The theory of imputed righteousness was first introduced into Christian thought by Martin Luther during the Reformation, 1,500 years after ascended into heaven. Luther analogized his novel doctrine to snow covering a dunghill (which he witnessed on the hillsides in Germany). The Catholic view is that the snow does not cover, but actually sinks into the, to produce “flowers” and “fruits” that are pleasing to God.
- 121 See also 22:11,15 where John continues the theme of what people have actually done during their lives, not whether their faith made them worthy of the imputed righteousness of Christ.
- 122 Council of Trent, Session 6, Canon 1, *Decrees on Justification* (January 13,1547).
- 123 Rom 4:15; Gal 3:10.
- 124 Note that God always takes the first step by moving man to baptism through what is called actual

or prevenient grace. In this first step, man is still under God's condemnation and does not have the theological virtue of faith. It is only through baptism that man first receives sanctifying grace and the virtues of faith, hope and charity. A man's will cannot move toward God unless God, the Prime Mover, moves it (see, for example, Ps 79:4,8,20; 84:5; Jer 31:18; Lam 5:21).

125 Cf. Tit 3:5-7.

126 1 Cor 6:11 Notice that "sanctification" and "justification" (two aorist verbs) happen at the same time, and that "sanctification" chronologically precedes "justification" in the verse.

127 Acts 22:16 The word for "wash away" (Greek, *apolouo*) is used in both Acts 22:16 and 1 Cor 6:11, the only two times it is used in the New Testament.

128 Cf. Rom 5:1-5

129 It is important to note that God moves man by His grace to do good, for man can do nothing without God (Jn 15:5). Thus, when man does penance make satisfaction for his sins, it is God's grace that produces the effect man. While man has free will, God's grace moves man "both to will and work for his good pleasure" (Phil 2:13). As Augustine says, when God accepts our good works, He is simply crowning His own gifts.

130 Cf. Rom 8:8; 1 Cor 7:32; Col 3:20; 4:1; Heb 11:6.

131 Cf. Acts 4:23; Rom 12:6; Eph 4:7; Jas 4:6; 1 Pet 4:10; 2 Pet 1:2.

132 The word "righteous" in Romans 5:19 (Greek, *dikaio*s) is the same word Scripture applies to many holy people, such as Joseph (Mt 1:19), John the Baptist (Mk 6:20), Zechariah and Elizabeth (Lk 1:6), Simeon (Lk 2:25), Joseph of Arimathea (Lk 23:50) and Lot (2 Pet 2:7).

133 There is a material and spiritual component to the covenant. Materially, God promises Abraham's descendants a physical dwelling place on earth (Gen 15:18-21). God fulfills this promise in Jos 21:43; Neh 9:7; and 1 Kg 8:5, which means today's Jews have no divine right to more land in Israel (thus refuting a movement called "Zionism"). Spiritually, God promises Abraham and his descendants a spiritual dwelling place in heaven (Gen 13:15; 17:7-8; 22:17-18; Heb 11:10,16), and He fulfills this promise through the New Covenant, which is why Abraham is called the father of Christians (Rom 4:16; Gal 3:7,16,29)

134 Rom 4:2-4. See also Gal 3:6; Jas 2:23. Catholics and Protestants agree that God saved people by the grace of the New Covenant even before the coming of Christ because God's eternal decree made Christ's sacrifice—the event that provided grace to mankind—an event that was certain to occur (Acts 2:23; see also 1 Pet 1:20).

135 Cf., Rom 6:16-17; 15:18; 16:26; 2 Cor 9:13; Heb 5:9.

136 Cf. Eph 6:23; Col 1:14; 1 Thess 1:3; 3:6; 5:8; 1 Tim 1:14; 2 Tim 1:13; 3:10; Tit 2:2; Philm 5; Gal 5:6.

137 Cf. Mt 3:2; 4:17; Mk 1:15; 6:12; Lk 13:3,5; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:22; 17:30, et al.

138 Rom 16:26; Gal 5:6; Acts 20:21.

139 Scripture distinguishes between faith that is exhibited in a state of grace Jas 2:1,8,22) and faith that is outside of God's grace (Jas 2:14,17,19,26), as well as works performed in grace (Jas 2:21-25) and works done outside of grace (Rom 4:4; 6:14,23; 11:6; Eph 2:8-9).

140 Cf. Rom 4:16; 6:14; 11:6. As a subsidiary point, when Paul refers to "works" done under the auspices of obligation and not grace, he often means works under the obsolete Mosaic law (cf. Rom 2:14; 3:20,28; 4:13; 7:4-7; 9:32; Acts 13:38; Gal 2:16; 3:17; Phil 3:9).

141 Mk 15:28; Lk 22:37; Acts 19:27; Rom 2:3; 3:28; 4:3-6,8-11,22-24; 6:11; 8:18,36; 9:8; 14:14; 1 Cor 4:1; 13:5,11; 2 Cor 3:5; 5:19; 10:2,7,11; 11:5; 12:6; Gal 3:6; Phil 3:13; 4:8; 2 Tim 4:16; Heb 11:19; Jas 2:23; 1 Pet 5:12

142 Heb 11:8-10,16; Gal 3:8-9; Gen 12:1-3.

143 V.19. Cf. Rom 4:3; Gen 15:6; Rom 4:18. Most Protestants argue that Abraham was first justified in Genesis 15:6. But Heb 11:8 is clear that Abraham was justified in Genesis 12:1-3, for he had the same justifying "faith" as Abel, Enoch, Noah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, and other Old Testament saints (see Heb 11:4-39). This proves that Gen 15:6, like Gen 12 and Gen 22, is an

- example of Abraham's progressive justification.
- 144 Romans 4:18-21. See also Heb 11:11.
- 145 Heb 11:19. God may have made Abraham prove he would slay his son as a temporal punishment for momentarily disbelieving that God could give him a natural heir in his and Sara's old age. See Gen 17:17 where Abraham laughed at God for making such a promise. Imposing the punishment of killing his son was a movement contrary to Abraham's intense desire to have a son, restoring to Abraham to the equality of justice for have disbelieved that God could give him a son.
- 146 Cf. Jas 2:21-23; Rom 4:3; Gen 22:17.
- 147 Ps 18:20,24.
- 148 1 Jn 3:7. Note that when Paul says, "None is righteous, no, not one"(Rom 3:10; Ps 14:3; 53:3), he is referring to those who are still under the condemnation of the law, and not in grace (see also Tit 3:5-7). This is why Paul there after explains that one is not justified by the law of Moses but by the grace of Christ (Rom 3:19-26).
- 149 Cf. Mk 16:20; Rom 8:28; 1 Cor 3:9 and 2 Cor 6:1 for examples of how God "works" with us through the operation of grace. This doesn't mean the efficacy of God's grace is determined by man. Rather, God determines the efficacy of grace according to His eternal decrees. If God efficaciously wills man to attain to grace, then the grace will infallibly "work" in man by causing him to freely choose the good.
- 150 Cf. Heb II:10,13,16
- 151 2 Pet 1:10. Even though God unconditionally wills the salvation of His elect and He always accomplishes His will, He gives all men sufficient grace to be saved. This is one of the most profound mysteries of the Faith.
- 152 Acts 13:22; 1 Sam 13:14. For Protestants to argue that David wasn't really saved at this moment accuses Scripture of the grossest deceptions (e.g., saying David had God's Spirit when he really did not) and God of play-acting (e.g., saying David was a man after God's heart when he really was not).
- 153 Cf. 1 Sam 16:13; 17:37; 18:28; 23:10-12; 30:8; 2 Sam 2:1-2; 6:9-15; 7:18-29.
- 154 Ps. 51:10. Because David's fall from justification is so problematic for Protestants, some argue that Paul is not referring to David in Romans 4:7, rather to a plurality of unidentified but regenerated sinners, because thereferenced Psalm (31:1) says "Blessed are they (in the plural) whose iniquities forgiven." This is a silly argument, for Paul in Romans 4:6 refers to the "man (singular/David) to whom God reputeth justice," and Romans 4:8(Psalm 31:2) also says "Blessed is the man (singular/David) to whom the Lord hath not imputed sin."
- 155 We can also refer to the Apostle Peter, who was blessed by Christ (Mt 16:18), fell from grace (Mt 26:75; Mk 14:72; Jn 18:17,25-27) and then restored to grace by Christ through confession and repentance (Jn 21:15-17).
- 156 Col 1:18; 2 Cor 2:15.
- 157 Mt 10:22; 24:13; Mk 13:13; 16:16; Acts 15:11; Rom 5:9-10; 1 Cor 3:15; 5:5; Jas 5:15.
- 158 Cf. Heb 7:27; 10:10; Heb 9:12.
- 159 Heb 8:3; 9:12. For an in-depth look at Christ's priestly mediation in heaven, see my book *The Biblical Basis for the Eucharist* (Our Sunda Visitor).

PROOF FROM SCRIPTURE AND THE FATHERS

We now look at the scriptural verses that teach specifically about purgatory. Like most of the core doctrines of the Christian faith, many (but not all) of the verses about purgatory allude to the doctrine implicitly, but not explicitly. This should not cast doubt upon the divine and apostolic origin of the doctrine. Most of the dogmas of Christianity are found only implicitly in Scripture. This is because God has revealed His Word in both Scripture and Tradition and not Scripture alone.

We see this with the most fundamental dogma of the Christian faith—the dogma of the Blessed Trinity. No Protestant is able to point to the verse or verses that teach that there are three divine persons in the one God, each of whom is also God. The Christological doctrines, specifically concerning the two natures and two wills of Christ, are also not explicit in Scripture. No verse tells us that Christ has two distinct natures or two distinct wills. It took the Catholic Church centuries to define these dogmas as she evaluated both Scripture and Tradition, just as it took her centuries to define the canon of Scripture.¹⁶⁰

This means that the Scriptures may be considered materially sufficient, but not formally sufficient, to teach the doctrines of the faith. “Material sufficiency” means that Scripture contains all the “materials” necessary to give us true doctrine. In other words, Scripture contains all the required “bricks” for building the dogmatic structure. However, sources outside of Scripture (namely, the oral apostolic Tradition and the Church) are often necessary to give form to the true meaning of the dogma. The Tradition, you might say, is the mortar that connects the bricks of Scripture, and the Church is the master builder who puts it all together.¹⁶¹

This concept of the material sufficiency of Scripture is to be distinguished from the Protestant’s view of Scripture’s formal sufficiency. Formal sufficiency means that all the materials in Scripture are in “user-ready” form; that the structure—the bricks and mortar—have already been put together. In other words, that the doctrines in Scripture are presented in such a clear and understandable way that neither Tradition nor the Church is necessary to understand their true meaning. Of course, both history and the existence of 30,000 different Protestant denominations tend to undercut such a theory!

Moreover, Protestants themselves are inconsistent in the way they apply their belief in formal sufficiency. For as we will see below, there is more explicit scriptural evidence for the dogma of purgatory (which most Protestants do not accept) than there is for the dogmas of the Trinity and Christology (which all Protestants do accept).

Interpreting the Scriptures

The Church's principal method of scriptural interpretation is based on the literal sense of the text.¹⁶² This is because God means what He says and is not trying to deceive us. Hence, the Church teaches that we are not to depart from the literal meaning of the text unless the interpretation is untenable, or necessity requires it. This is why many passages of Scripture explicitly reveal fundamental Catholic doctrines when interpreted in their literal and obvious sense (E.g. Matthew 16:18-19; 19:9; 26:26-28; John 3:5; 6:51-58; 20:23; 1Pet 3:21; James 2:24; 5:14-15). This approach to God's Word, which is the most reasonable one of all, resounds in the souls of those Protestants who eventually become Catholic. The literal method is also the way in which the early Church Fathers interpreted Scripture. In fact, the Church teaches that we are not to depart from the interpretation of the Fathers on a matter of the faith when they are unanimous (and they were unanimous in their belief in purgatory).¹⁶³

In addition to the literal sense, the Church also employs the spiritual sense in its exegesis of Scripture. The spiritual sense is composed of the allegorical, the moral, and the anagogical senses.¹⁶⁴ The allegorical refers to the spiritual and symbolic significance of the text (often through the use of types and metaphors); the moral refers to the ways in which the text leads us to act justly; and, the anagogical sense refers to the text's eternal significance. Many of the verses alluding to purgatory are interpreted in the spiritual sense: for example, fear of the prison (allegorical) of purgatory helps us to live holy lives (moral) as we approach the Day of Judgment (anagogical). We will keep these senses in mind as we proceed with our analysis.

Let us first examine the relevant scriptures and then look at the apostolic Tradition which has been preserved in the writings of the early Church Fathers.

The Teachings of Jesus

Matthew 5:25-26: The Judge Will Put Us in Prison

We have already referred to this teaching of Jesus a number of times. After Jesus preaches the Beatitudes, and about how our own righteousness (not His imputed righteousness) must exceed that of the Pharisees,¹⁶⁵ He issues warnings about who “shall be liable to judgment” (Mt 5:22). Then Jesus says, Make friends quickly with your accuser, while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison; truly I say to you, you will never get out till you have paid the last penny.¹⁶⁶

The first thing we note is that Jesus in this passage is teaching by using metaphors. A metaphor is something that represents or denotes something else in reality. It is figurative language that has an underlying meaning. Hence, to properly exegete the passage, we must identify what the metaphors in the passage represent. This is done by examining how Scripture elsewhere uses the same language.

We first note that Jesus is teaching about judgment and its consequent penalty, prison. Every other time Jesus teaches about “judgment” in the New Testament, He is teaching about God’s judgment upon sinners, and usually in the context of either the Particular or General Judgment.¹⁶⁷ In fact, this is the fundamental principle underlying Jesus’ entire Sermon on the Mount. There is nothing in the text to suggest that Jesus is speaking about temporal matters in verses 25-26 and spiritual matters in the rest of His discourse. Hence, we can assume that Matthew 5:25-26 is about the judgment of the person’s soul at death.

Jesus begins by saying, “Make friends quickly with your accuser.” The word “accuser” (Greek, *antidikos*) is used only three other times in the New Testament: once in Luke 12:58 (which is the related passage to Matthew 5:25-26), once in Luke 18:3 (which refers to a parable about a civil “adversary” in court), and once in 1 Peter 5:8 (which refers to “the devil” and how he seeks to ruin souls). The passage from Peter, then, is most relevant because it is explicitly connected with the spiritual and the soul. The passage is also relevant because it provides the only New Testament definition of “accuser”: the devil. Peter says, “Your adversary (*antidikos*) the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”

Scripture teaches that Satan prowls around in an effort to accuse mankind of sin before God and steal souls for hell. Zechariah reveals a vision of

“Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him” (3:1). We also read how Satan attempted to “accuse” Job of sin (Job 1:6-12). The Book of Revelation also reveals, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.”¹⁶⁸ In this verse, the accuser is Satan who has been “thrown down” to the earth to “make war” on Christians to seize their souls.¹⁶⁹

In Matthew 5:25-26, Jesus is referring to Satan when He says “accuser.” When He tells us to make friends with the “accuser” before going to court, Jesus is not telling us to befriend Satan, but to settle our score with him by renouncing all of his empty promises in this life so that we do not have to be accused by him before the Judge in the next life. Many saints have said that both one’s guardian angel and Satan are present at the Particular Judgment, with our angel revealing to Christ our good deeds and Satan accusing us of our bad deeds. This is how the “accuser” will hand us over to the “Judge.” Jesus Christ is the “lawgiver and judge” to whom all judgment has been given by the Father.¹⁷⁰ The ability to “make friends” with Satan also means that we can grow in virtue and holiness and make satisfaction for our sins by overcoming his temptations. In other words, we can use Satan to our advantage in this life.

Jesus’ use of the phrase “going with” the devil to court affirms the same thought. Our journey to the “court” of God, the Particular Judgment, will involve battling Satan during our life. We do not want to wait until we get to court (the Particular Judgment) to renounce him, because then, the Judge will be in charge of the proceedings. As we have learned, the time for contrition and mercy is in this life. Once we pass to the next life, we face only God’s strict and exacting justice. If we have not dealt sufficiently with the devil in this life (renouncing sin and making due satisfaction to God), we will have to do so in the “prison” of the next life. Jesus urges us to make friends quickly, because the debt owed to God is easier to pay in this life than in the next, and “time is short!” (Rev 12:12).

Because the “accuser” and “judge” are in the spiritual world, the “prison” Jesus refers to is also in the spiritual world. The New Testament uses the word “prison” in a spiritual context only two other times: in Peter’s first Epistle and the Book of Revelation. Peter recalls how Christ “went and preached to the spirits in prison” after His death and before His

resurrection.¹⁷¹ This “prison” refers to a temporary state after death, which was not either heaven or hell. Similarly, in Revelation Jesus tells the Christians at Smyrna, “Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.”¹⁷²

In this verse, Jesus associates “prison” with a temporary abode of “suffering” where the righteous are “tested” for a time. In Matthew’s related passage (18:34), regarding the parable of the wicked servant, Jesus says that servant is delivered “to the torturers until he paid all the debt.”¹⁷³ Thus, the spiritual (not literal) use of “prison” in the New Testament always refers to a place of temporal punishment for departed souls. In light of these precedents, then, we can conclude that the “prison” of Matthew 5:25-26 is also a place of temporal punishment for departed souls—or, purgatory.

The case would be even stronger if we could demonstrate that the debt the accused pays to get out of the prison refers to his sins. And we can. We have already shown that the devil seeks to accuse the prisoner of sin, and it is this debt of sin that keeps the prisoner detained. But Scripture also expressly equates “debt” (Greek, *opheilonti*) with “sin” (Greek, *hamartias*). For example, Luke’s version of the Our Father says, “and forgive us our sins; for we ourselves forgive every one who is indebted to us” (11:4). Matthew also records, “And forgive us our debts, As we also have forgiven our debtors” (6:12). This demonstrates that Matthew and Luke are referring to paying the “debt of sin.” This also means that the payment in Matthew 5:25-26 is to make satisfaction for sin—the very purpose of purgatory.

We further note that Jesus requires the sinner to pay the last “penny” before he can be released from the prison. A “penny” (Greek, *kodranten*) was one of the smallest denominations of money that existed during Jesus’ time. This denomination was equivalent to one sixty-fourth of a denarius (a day’s wage). This is also significant. It demonstrates that even the slightest faults will have to be expiated in the prison of purgatory. God’s holiness and justice and the purity of His heaven demand no less. In the same gospel, Jesus says, “I tell you, on the day of judgment men will render account for every careless word they utter” (Mt 12:36).

To deny the passage’s obvious connection to purgatory, Protestants often argue that the prison of Matthew 5:25 is really the hell of the damned (in so doing, they admit that the passage has underlying spiritual meanings that

must be interpreted). They argue that the Greek phrase for “till” (*heos an*) continues the action of the main verb “you will never get out.” If “till” does continue the action of the main verb, then the “you will never get out” action is ongoing, which means that the person is in hell, for he will “never get out” of hell. How do Catholics respond to this technical argument?

The Greek use of *heos* (until) does not mandate this conclusion. In some cases, *heos* continues the action of the main verb, and in other cases, it terminates the action. Matthew provides both usages in his Gospel, which means that the Protestant cannot prove his case on mere textual grounds.¹⁷⁴ In fact, over seventy-five percent of the time *heos* is used in the New Testament, it terminates the action of the main verb. The percentage is even higher when examining the Septuagint (Greek) translation of the Old Testament. If *heos* in Matthew 5:26 terminates the action of the verb “will never get out,” then that means the person will get out of the prison, after he has paid his debt.

How can we definitively resolve the meaning of *heos* in Matthew 5:26? We do so by examining the context of the passage. We first note that, outside of Matthew 5:25-26 and its related passages, the word “prison” is used sixty-one times in the New Testament, yet it never refers to the hell of the reprobate. The Protestant, therefore, is attempting to define “prison” in a way that Scripture never does. Even colloquially, the term “prison” refers to a place where someone must serve a sentence and, after he does, he is set free. Nothing in Matthew 5 indicates that Jesus is using the word “prison” in a manner other than its plain meaning.

Jesus’ metaphorical use of money and debt (paying the last penny) also demonstrates that the man’s stay in “prison” is temporary. On the money side, because people have only a finite amount of funds, and the purpose of the person’s incarceration is to pay funds to satisfy debt, it follows that his stay in prison is terminated when he runs out of funds (that is, when he is finished making satisfaction). Jesus’ use of the last penny also indicates that, at some point, there will be nothing left to pay and thus no further detainment will be required. On the debt side, because debt in Scripture is a metaphor for sin and indebtedness is a finite condition, means that the sin (represented by the debt) is also finite. In other words, the sin being satisfied is venial and thus the punishment is temporal. This satisfaction is unnecessary in heaven and impossible in hell, which means the prisoner is in purgatory.

Finally, we note that scriptural references to the punishments of hell are never described in the context of money or paying debt. Paying debt is a

temporal punishment only. This further underscores that Matthew 5:25-26 is about making satisfaction for temporal punishments (for venial and forgiven mortal sin) which restores us to the equality of God's justice and friendship. As we will see below, Tertullian, Cyprian of Carthage, Lactantius, Basil, Ambrose, Augustine and Caesar of Arles also interpreted Matthew 5:25-26 to be a metaphorical description of purgatory. For these reasons, the great weight of the exegetical evidence supports the Catholic interpretation.

Matthew 12:32: Forgiveness in this Age or the Next

In the verses that both precede and follow Matthew 12:32, Jesus is speaking about soteriological issues: God, Satan, merits, and judgment.¹⁷⁵ Sandwiched in between Jesus' teaching is His warning about blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Jesus says,

Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. And whoever says a word against the Son of man will be forgiven; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.¹⁷⁶

The plain meaning of Jesus' words is obvious. Jesus declares that there is forgiveness both "in this age and in the age to come." If the phrase "age to come" refers to life after death, then this passage must refer to purgatory. That is because forgiveness is unnecessary in heaven and impossible in hell. To properly exegete this passage, then, we have to understand what the phrase "in the age to come" means.

The identical Greek phrase ("in this age or the age to come") is used only one other time in the New Testament, in Ephesians 1:21, where Paul describes Jesus' name as "above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come."¹⁷⁷ Let us look at the context of this verse from Ephesians. In the previous verse 20, Paul describes the risen Christ as sitting at the Father's "right hand in the heavenly places," and, in verse 22, how the Father "has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all."

This means that the "age to come" in Ephesians 1:21 refers to the afterlife where Jesus intercedes in heaven as High Priest before the Father.¹⁷⁸ This also means that there is forgiveness in the afterlife. In fact, every time the New Testament uses the phrase "age to come," it refers to the afterlife.¹⁷⁹

Ephesians 1:21 provides us other insights about Matthew 12:32's connection to purgatory. First, the verse in Ephesians (1:21) says Jesus' name "is *above every name*." This is the same phrase that Paul uses in Philippians 2:10 when he says that God "bestowed on him the name which is above every name." This is significant because Paul is describing the importance of Jesus' name in "the age to come" in Ephesians 1:21, and its importance to those "under the earth" in Philippians 2:10.

As we have seen, the abode "under the earth" may be seen as a reference to the "Church Suffering" in purgatory. This connects those "in the age to come" with those "under the earth"—that is, those in the afterlife who are subject to Christ's heavenly reign.¹⁸⁰ Those "in the age to come" are said to be "under his feet" (Eph 1:22) and those "under the earth" are said to "bend the knee" (Phil 2:10) at the name of Jesus. This means that those in Matthew 12:32 who are forgiven in "the age to come" are the same people who are "under the earth"—two allusions to the abode of purgatory.

Second, Ephesians 1:22 makes reference to "the church, which is his body," which, given the context, is also a reference to the Church in the afterlife (because it exists in "the age to come" where God "has put all things under His feet"). We have seen Paul make the same reference to Christ's "body, the church" in Colossians 1:24 when he says, "I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church."

Because Paul is speaking of the same Church (for there is only one Church) in both Ephesians 1:22 and Colossians 1:24, means that Paul can suffer for the sake of the Church in "the age to come," the same "Church Suffering" that is "under the earth." That is, Paul can suffer for the souls in purgatory. As we will continue to see, our sufferings atone not only for sin and temporal punishments in this life, but also give rise to "forgiveness in the age to come" (Mt 12:32). Hence, there is a clear, scriptural connection between "suffering," "church," "body," "under the earth," and "age to come"—all references to purgatory. Augustine, Jerome, Pope Gregory, and Pope Gelasius also interpreted Matthew 12:32 as a reference to purgatory.

The possibility of forgiveness in the age to come supports the Catholic and Scriptural teaching about venial sin. As John teaches, there is sin "which is mortal" and sin "which is not mortal" (1 Jn 5:16-17). Because mortal sin kills the life of grace in the soul, it cannot be forgiven in "the age to come" when the soul's time for contrition has passed. Mortal sin must be confessed and

absolved in this life. Because venial sin is harmful but not deadly, it is forgiven in the “age to come,” according to the plain words of our Savior.

But if they want to maintain their objection to purgatory, Protestants must deny these plain words of Jesus. To that end, Protestants will often argue that in Matthew 12:32 Jesus was simply trying to emphasize the gravity of the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. In other words, Jesus didn’t really mean there was forgiveness in “the age to come,” only that blasphemy against the Holy Ghost would *never* be forgiven. They point to a related passage in Mark 3:29 where Jesus says, “but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin.”

The Protestant argument, of course, denies the plain and literal meaning of Jesus’ words. It would be superfluous for Jesus to say there is no forgiveness for blasphemy against the Holy Spirit in “the age to come” if there wasn’t a possibility of *any* forgiveness in “the age to come.” Moreover, because there really *is* an “age to come,” this would make Jesus’ statement misleading if not deceptive. Jesus didn’t need to fabricate a phony stage of forgiveness to emphasize the gravity of the sin against the Spirit, and no one in the early Church ever believed otherwise.

It should also be noted that the Protestant argument misunderstands the meaning of the “unforgivable sin.” While it is true that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is an “eternal sin,” all mortal sins are eternal sins because they merit eternal damnation unless God forgives them before death. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ is sufficient to atone for all sins—even blasphemies against the Holy Spirit—so long as the sinner repents in this life. Hence, the Church has always understood Jesus’ warning to apply only to those people who die unrepentant. That is, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit means rejecting God’s mercy and forgiveness, which is called impenitence.¹⁸¹ God does not forgive this sin because the sinner does not want forgiveness. In this sense, then, the sin is “unforgivable.”

Luke 12:47-48: Some Servants Receive Only a Light Beating

In Luke’s Gospel, chapter 12, Jesus teaches a parable about the master and his servants—another spiritual teaching about the consequences of sin. In the parable, Jesus warns His servants to be ready for His coming, “for the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (v.40). In describing the potential punishments that unprepared servants could suffer at the Master’s

coming, Jesus says

But if that servant says to himself, “My master is delayed in coming,” and begins to beat the menservants and the maidservants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will punish him and put him with the unfaithful. And that servant who knew his master’s will, but did not make ready or act according to his will, shall receive a severe beating. But he who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, shall receive a light beating.

Generally, when Jesus talks about punishing sinners at His “coming,” He is talking about His Second Coming at the General Judgment, and not the sinner’s Particular Judgment (although a person’s Particular Judgment is a form of “coming” as well). However, because the passage refers to the Master’s coming on “the day,” the passage could be about the servants’ Particular Judgment.¹⁸² Whether this parable is about the General Judgment or the Particular Judgment, it is a strong allusion to purgatory. Why? It is because Jesus is referring to temporal punishments for the saved in the next life, or in “the age to come.”

Jesus first mentions the wicked servant who committed mortal sins of commission, namely, assaulting his servants and getting drunk. Scripture teaches that such sins deserve eternal condemnation.¹⁸³ In regard to this servant, Jesus says He “will punish him and put him with the unfaithful” (v.46). Jesus uses this word for “punish” (Greek, *dichotomeo*) only one other time in the New Testament, in the related passage Matthew 24:51, which regards the same wicked servant who beat his servants and got drunk: “the master of that house will come . . . and will punish him, and put him with the hypocrites; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.”¹⁸⁴ The “hypocrites” (Greek, *apistos*) are the unbelievers whose “lot shall be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone” (Rev 21:8). This means that Jesus in Luke 12 is talking about punishment in the afterlife.

However, Jesus also mentions the two servants who committed venial sins of omission. The first servant knew his Master’s will but failed to act according to it, and Jesus says this servant “shall receive a severe beating.” The second servant also failed to do His Master’s will, but was ignorant of His will because he “did not know” it. Jesus says this servant “shall receive a light beating.” Jesus in His parables uses this word for “beating” (*dero*) six other times, and it always refers to temporal, not eternal, punishment.¹⁸⁵ In

fact, the other instances in the New Testament where *dero* is used refer exclusively to temporal punishments or penance.¹⁸⁶

Thus, Jesus makes a clear distinction between temporal and eternal punishments in the life to come. Those who sin mortally will receive the eternal punishment of damnation. Those who sin only venially will receive temporal punishments to make satisfaction for their sins, but will still be saved—they will not be “put with the unfaithful.” Further, those who commit venial sins will be punished in proportion to their offense. Those who were ignorant of God’s will are less culpable than those who were not, and thus, the ignorant servants will receive a “light beating,” while the lazy servants will receive a “severe beating.” In short, Jesus presents a continuum of punishment in the afterlife—either eternal or temporal—depending upon the person’s deeds.

Because Jesus’ parable is in the context of His Second Coming also demonstrates that there is pain and suffering in the afterlife for those who are destined for heaven. As John reveals in the Book of Revelation, “he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away” (21:4). This elimination of pain and suffering—which according to Revelation is happening in eternity—occurs only after Christ creates a “new heaven and a new earth,” when “the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more” (v.1).

It is interesting to note that Luke 12:47-48 references Deuteronomy 25:1-3. This related Old Testament passage says,

If there is a dispute between men, and they come into court, and the judges decide between them, acquitting the innocent and condemning the guilty, then if the guilty man deserves to be beaten, the judge shall cause him to lie down and be beaten in his presence with a number of stripes in proportion to his offense. Forty stripes may be given him, but not more; lest, if one should go on to beat him with more stripes than these, your brother be degraded in your sight.

It seems certain that Jesus was drawing from Deuteronomy 25 in both His teachings in Matthew 5:25-26 and Luke 12:47-48. In describing the punishment of the sinner, Jesus uses “judge” and “court” (Matthew 5) and “beating” (Luke 12). Jesus also alludes to the punishment being “in proportion to his offense” (“severe” versus “light” beatings in Luke 12). Jesus’ clear connection to Deuteronomy 25 is important because it further

underscores that He is describing temporal punishments in Matthew 5 and Luke 12 (just as they are temporal in Deuteronomy 25). Moreover, both the punishments in Matthew 5 and Luke 12 are imposed in the afterlife (in Matthew 5, at the “judgment”; in Luke 12, at the Master’s “coming”). These connections further support the Catholic doctrine of purgatory.

The Good Thief’s Salvation Does Not Disprove Purgatory

When examining Jesus’ teachings in the context of purgatory, Protestants often bring up how Jesus forgave the Good Thief during the crucifixion. They believe that Jesus’ spontaneous gift of salvation for the thief denies any need for purgatory. We recall that when the thief asked Jesus to remember him when Jesus came into His kingdom, Jesus responded to him by saying, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise” (Lk 23:43). Protestants use this extraordinary event to deny not only the doctrine of purgatory, but also the Catholic doctrines concerning the necessity of baptism and good works for salvation. Yet Jesus’ isolated statement during this unusual event does nothing of the sort.

On the most basic level, Jesus’ statement doesn’t necessarily preclude the Good Thief from having to go to purgatory before joining Jesus in “Paradise.” The thief, upon his death, may certainly have had to go through additional purification before entering heaven on that same day.¹⁸⁷ We must also remember that purgatory is for those souls who still owe God satisfaction for their sins. But the Good Thief does a number of things suggesting that he would have already made sufficient satisfaction for his sin before his death.

For example, the Good Thief recognizes that he and the other criminal “are receiving the due reward of our deeds” (Lk 23:42). In other words, Scripture reveals that the Good Thief’s punishment of crucifixion was the due debt he owed to God for his crimes. In prior verses the Good Thief also rebuked the other thief who was reviling Jesus and expressed his “fear” of God. He also recognized that Jesus “has done nothing wrong.” After the thief confesses both His guilt and Jesus’ goodness, he asks Jesus for salvation: “Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingly power.”

Thus, the Good Thief repents of his sins and exhibits faith, hope, and charity to the moment of his death. When we couple these factors with his painful demise, we may conclude that the Good Thief was completely

purified of his sins, and this is why Jesus blessed him with salvation. That would mean that the Good Thief would have had no need for purgatory, for his debt of punishment was satisfied on his cross. The thief's actions also prevent one's asserting that he was saved by "faith alone," for his faith, like that of David, was accompanied by sorrow for his sin, hope in God, and charity toward his fellow man.¹⁸⁸

The Teachings of Paul

In addition to the Lord Jesus, the Apostle Paul also provides us with a number of teachings that support the doctrine of purgatory. In fact, his teaching in 1 Corinthians 3 is perhaps the most explicit teaching on purgatory in all of the New Testament. Most of the early Church Fathers (such as Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, and Pope Gregory the Great) interpreted Paul's teaching to be a clear reference to purgatory. We begin by looking at this most critical passage.

1 Corinthians 3:10-17: We May Be Saved Only as Through Fire

Before we examine the passage, we first look at some background. At the very beginning of his letter, Paul makes it clear that the Corinthians are "saved" Christians. In the first chapter Paul says he is writing "to those sanctified in Christ Jesus" who have been given "the grace of God" and who "are not lacking in any spiritual gift." Because their sanctification is a process as they respond to God's grace, Paul affirms that the Corinthians "are being saved" (1 Cor 1:2-18).

Notwithstanding their exalted position, Paul points out that worldly wisdom had trickled into the Corinthian church. In fact, in the first two chapters Paul refers to this issue of "wisdom" fifteen times.¹⁸⁹ The wisdom of the pagan world, which thought the Cross of Christ was folly, was corrupting Christ's gospel in Corinth.¹⁹⁰ This worldly wisdom was causing "dissensions" and "quarreling" among the Corinthians,¹⁹¹ which Scripture elsewhere reveals are serious sins.¹⁹² In short, even though they are currently "saved," Paul is warning the Corinthians that they are sinning against God and risking the loss of their souls.

Chapter 3 opens with Paul's repeating his warning about the Corinthians' worldliness and divisive attitudes. He says, "for you are still in the flesh. For

while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving like ordinary men?” (v.3). After affirming their equality in spite of their factious ways, Paul says that “each shall receive his wages according to his labor. For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building” (vv.8-9). Paul then reveals the potential consequences, on the Day of Judgment, of the Corinthians’ sins:

According to the commission of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and another man is building upon it. Let each man take care how he builds upon it. For no other foundation can any one lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any one builds on the foundation with gold, silver precious stones, wood, hay, stubble—each man’s work will become manifest; for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work which any man has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If any one destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him. For God’s temple is holy, and that temple you are.

Let us unpack this crucial passage. We first note that Paul is teaching by using a string of metaphors. As we saw in Matthew 5:25-26, this means we have to interpret the metaphors because they represent underlying truths. Paul first tells the Corinthians that they are “God’s building.” Then Paul says that he, as a skilled master builder, “laid a foundation” and that “each man builds upon it.” Paul then says that the “foundation” is Jesus Christ. Thus, we see that Paul (a skilled master builder) laid the foundation (Jesus Christ) of the building (the Corinthians). In other words, Paul as a minister of the gospel revealed to the Corinthians the truth of Jesus Christ, who must now be the foundation of their entire lives.

Paul also says that the Corinthians, as “God’s fellow workers,” must build upon the foundation he laid for them. Paul explains how one can erect his building on the foundation of Christ with various types of materials—“gold,” “silver,” “precious stones,” “wood,” “hay,” and “stubble.” These materials are metaphors for the deeds that the Corinthians perform during their lives. The gold, silver, and precious stones represent good works, and the wood, hay, and stubble represent bad works.

Paul elsewhere connects “deeds” with “laying a foundation” to secure

one's eternal "life" when he writes, "They are to do good, to be rich in good deeds, liberal and generous, thus laying up for themselves a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life which is life indeed" (2 Tim 6:19). This is why Paul says once more to the Corinthians that one "builds on the foundation," and then says, "each man's work will become manifest." The materials with which one builds on his foundation represent the person's good and bad works or deeds, and they will be subject to God's strict judgment.

In addition to calling the Corinthians "God's building," he also calls them "God's temple." Paul explains his use of this alternative metaphor when he says, "For God's temple is holy, and that temple you are." In other words, Paul is explaining to the Corinthians that they are not some ordinary building. Rather, they have become the very dwelling place of God, through the gift of grace. This is why Paul says, "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?" Later in the letter Paul also says, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you which you have from God?" (6:19). Because the souls of the Corinthians have literally become temples of God, Paul says, "Let each man take care how he builds upon it."

The Corinthians must be careful in building their spiritual edifice, because God will examine the structure when they die. Paul says, "for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done." The phrase "the Day" refers to the person's Day of Judgment. Earlier in the letter, Paul says Christ will sustain the Corinthians "to the end . . . in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ," in reference to their individual judgment (1:8). Later in the letter, Paul says he has excommunicated a member of the church so that his soul "may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (5:5).

Elsewhere Paul also uses the expression when he asks God to have mercy on his friend Onesiphorus: "may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that Day". (2 Tim 1:18). In the same letter, Paul looks to his own Particular Judgment when he says that "the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day" (4:8). Paul further tells the Hebrews to encourage one another "all the more as you see the Day drawing near" (10:25). As Scripture also demonstrates, "the day" has a soteriological significance, referring either to the Particular or General Judgment.¹⁹³

Thus, Paul reveals that God will judge the Corinthians according to their

works on their Day of Judgment. Given his previous admonitions, it is clear that Paul has the Corinthians' sins of worldliness and factiousness on his mind. Paul affirms he is speaking of God's judgment in the next chapter when he says, "Therefore, do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then every man will receive his commendation from God" (1 Cor 4:5). This reiterates Paul's teaching in other passages of Scripture about God's judgment of one's works:

For he will render to every man according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are factious and do not obey the truth, but obey wickedness, there will be wrath and fury.¹⁹⁴

For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God . . . So each of us shall give account of himself to God (Rom 14:10,12).

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body (2 Cor 5:10).

How will God judge a man's works? Paul says that God will reveal the work with fire, and "the fire will test what sort of work each one has done" (1 Cor 3:13). As we have seen, Scripture uses "fire" both metaphorically (to represent God's divine justice) and literally (to represent what God uses to purge and destroy).¹⁹⁵ Just as God "tests our hearts"¹⁹⁶ during our lives to purify and perfect us for heaven, God "tests our work" with fire after we die to evaluate how we "finished the race."¹⁹⁷ Thus, Paul reveals three outcomes of God's judgment after His testing by fire:

The man who built with only good materials will receive a reward.

The man who built with both good and bad materials will have his bad materials burned up by fire; he too will have to pass through the same fire but then will be saved.

The man who built with only bad materials has destroyed God's temple, and God will destroy him.

Paul says that the man who built with only good materials is saved (he receives his "reward"), and the man who built with only bad materials is condemned (he is "destroyed"). This is because the good materials represent good works and the bad materials represent evil works. This teaching reiterates the polarity of the salvation/damnation scenario that Paul describes

in Romans 2:7-8 in regard to one's works: those who do good works are rewarded with "eternal life," and those who do bad works are subject to "wrath and fury." In other words, if people are condemned for bad works, then people are saved (not just rewarded) for good works.

What about the man who built with both good and bad materials? Paul explains: "If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire." The man "suffers loss" because some of his "work is burned up." The Greek for "suffer loss" (*zemiothesetai*) refers to punishment, which means the saved man is punished after death for his bad works. The New Testament uses this word (from the Greek verb *zemioo*) even to describe eternal punishment.¹⁹⁸ The Old Testament also uses the word (from the Hebrew, *anash*) to mean "penalty," "punish," or "suffer."¹⁹⁹ In addition, the Old Testament uses the word (*anash/zemioo*) to describe a monetary "fine."²⁰⁰

This means there is a connection between the "fine" of 1 Corinthians 3:15 and the "payment of the last penny" in Matthew 5:26. Both use monetary metaphors to describe temporal punishments in the afterlife imposed for bad deeds. In the case of Matthew 5, the man is imprisoned which refers to the "pain of loss" and "pain of duration" that we previously discussed. In 1 Corinthians 3, the man suffers loss from fire which refers to the "pain of sense."

What is critical to note in 1 Corinthians 3:15 is that the man is punished after death for building with bad materials, but he is still saved. The Greek for "will be saved" (*sothesetai*) refers to nothing less than the salvation with which God rewards the Elect at the end of their lives. Needless to say, a post-mortem punishment by fire that precedes salvation is utterly foreign to Protestant theology. If a man's sins have already been washed away by the imputed righteousness of Christ, how can he be punished for those sins after death? Because this passage is so damaging to Protestant theology, Protestant apologists have scrambled to come up with rebuttals. Let us briefly examine the most common ones.

Bad motives, not sins?

Because most Protestants do not believe a saved person can be judged for his sins after death (because he was already saved by "faith alone" during his life), he is forced to ascribe another meaning to the bad materials (wood, hay,

stubble) that were burned up in the fire. Thus, some Protestants argue that the bad materials are metaphors for the person's bad motives, and not his bad works. In other words, the saved Christian performed good deeds (represented by gold, silver, precious stones) during his life, but some of these deeds had less than stellar motivations (represented by wood, hay, stubble). By making this distinction between motives (for the saved) and sins/works (for the damned), the Protestant attempts to save his "faith alone" theology while denying the doctrine of purgatory.

Of course, these verses say nothing about "motivations" and thus the attempt is pure anachronism. With this argument, the Protestant creates an arbitrary dichotomy between how God judges the saved in verses 14-15 (by their motives) and how God judges the damned in verse 17 (by their sins). Moreover, from a biblical perspective, the Protestant is making a distinction without a difference. This is because Scripture teaches that bad motives are sins. In some cases, they are the worst kind of sins. As we have discussed, sin originates in the soul of man where he harbors his evil motives. These motives give rise to sin when the free will gives in to them. As James says, "then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin; and sin when it is full-grown brings forth death" (1:15).

When Paul says in both Romans 2 and 14 that each of us will have to give an account of our deeds at the judgment seat of Christ, he repeatedly refers to the interior motive of passing "judgment" on our neighbor. In Romans 2, Paul says, "Therefore you have no excuse, O man, whoever you are, when you judge another; for in passing judgment upon him you condemn yourself" (v.1). In Romans 14, Paul says, "Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? Then let us no more pass judgment on one another."²⁰¹ Paul even goes on to say that "whatever does not proceed from faith is sin" (v.23). Hence, Paul is revealing that our interior motives (here, mentally judging another) are severely judged by God, because bad motives are sins. These are the very defects that must be rooted out in purgatory before we attain to the Beatific Vision.

We have also seen that Paul in his Letter to the Corinthians is addressing sin in the Corinthian church. In chapter 1, Paul mentions the "dissension" and "quarreling" among the Corinthians. In chapter 3, Paul says there is "jealousy and strife" among them. In his Second letter to the Corinthians, Paul classifies "quarreling" and "jealousy" as grave sins, along with the sins of

anger, selfishness, slander, gossip, conceit and disorder—all, evidently, prevalent attributes of the church at Corinth (Cf. 2 Cor 12:20).

Paul also tells the Corinthians that “there is immorality among you, and of a kind that is not found even among the pagans” (5:1) and warns that “neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God” (6:9-10). In short, Paul is telling the Corinthians that they have been committing mortal sins, not just harboring bad motivations. The Corinthians need to avoid these sins because these sins will be judged by fire and they will determine their eternal destiny. Thus, the “bad materials” metaphor in 1 Corinthians 3 refers to the Corinthians’ sins, not merely their motives—both of which, by the way, are to be tested by the fire of God’s divine justice.

Loss of rewards?

Because the phrase “suffer loss” (*zemiotesetai*) in 1 Corinthians 3:15 refers to temporal punishment after death, and this post-mortem punishment for the saved is irreconcilable with Protestant theology, Protestant apologists have to neutralize the phrase. To that end, the Protestant correctly notes that the man who builds with good materials receives a reward and the man who builds with both good and bad materials suffers loss. Based on the continuum of the building metaphor, the Protestant concludes that “suffering loss” is the opposite of receiving a “reward.” Thus, the Protestant is forced to equate “suffering loss” with losing “rewards,” and not with temporal punishments. In other words, God is granting rewards to the man in verse 14, and removing rewards from the man in verse 15—but saving both of them. Is this what verse 15 says? No.

Verse 15 actually says, “If any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.” It is the work that is burned up, not the reward. The person who builds with both good and bad materials does not lose his reward, because salvation is the reward.²⁰² Paul says that “knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you are serving the Lord Christ.”²⁰³ Because the inheritance of heaven is the reward, the man in verse 15 did not lose it. Thus, if the man indeed receives the reward of salvation, how does he “suffer loss”? The answer to this question poses another insurmountable problem for Protestant theology.

The man “suffers loss” because he must pass through the same fire that burned up his bad works in order to be saved. As we have seen, after Paul explains that a man’s work is burned up and that he will suffer loss, he goes on to say, “though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.” The Greek word for “but only” (*houtos*) is an adverb which means “just as” or “in the same manner.”²⁰⁴ Paul uses it in the preceding chapter, in 1 Corinthians 2:11, when he says that a man doesn’t comprehend the thoughts of another man, “just as” (so also) he doesn’t comprehend the thoughts of God.

As applied to 1 Corinthians 3:15, the adverb “but only” (*houtos*) modifies the verb “will be saved” (*sothesetai*). The modification is directed by the adverbial clause “as through fire.” This means the adverb *houtos* tells us how the man is saved: by passing through fire. Thus, the man who did bad works must, in the same manner, pass through the fire that burned up his bad works to obtain salvation. This means that the man’s salvation is delayed on the basis of his works, for before being saved he must first endure a trial by fire. This is hostile to Protestant theology, which holds that works provide no basis for how one attains salvation (through fire), only how one enjoys salvation (rewards).

The man must pass through the same fire in order to be purged of the things that produced the bad works in the first place. Because the phrase “suffer loss” refers to temporal punishment, the man who passes through the fire experiences temporal punishment for the defects associated with his bad works. If there are any defects in the man’s “spiritual” building (venial sin, evil inclinations, debts of punishment), the fire will consume them, just as it consumed the defective materials (wood, hay, stubble) in the physical building. As Christ Himself revealed, in the context of God’s judgment of our deeds, “every one will be salted with fire” (Mk 9:49). St. Peter also warned the faithful to “think not strange the burning heat which is to try you” (1 Pet 4:12). Thus, the scriptural and Catholic view is that works determine both whether salvation is attained, and, if so, how it is attained. Works serve as a basis to advance or retard salvation, depending upon what materials one used to build his spiritual edifice—a concept inimical to Protestant theology.

What about the man who built with only bad materials? Paul says that he has destroyed God’s temple, and thus “God will destroy him.” This means that the person will be condemned, for the fire has consumed the entire edifice and there is nothing left for God.²⁰⁵ We therefore see a continuum in Paul’s metaphor: the man who builds with only good materials is rewarded

with salvation; the man who builds with both good and bad materials suffers a delay, but ultimately receives salvation; and the man who builds with only bad materials loses his salvation. This continuum refutes the Protestant argument that the man in verse 15 is losing rewards but not incurring punishments. It also parallels Jesus' teaching in Luke 12:47-48, where the ignorant and lazy servants are punished temporally after their earthly life, while the wicked servant is punished eternally.

Because the fire consumes the bad materials used by the man in verse 15, his temple is destroyed to some degree. However, the man in verse 17 who builds with only bad materials destroys his temple completely.²⁰⁶ Both men build with flammable materials, but the man in verse 15 was saved and the man in verse 17 was condemned. Why? It is because the man's spiritual edifice in verse 15 included fire-proof materials as well. These materials (good works) would have included confessing his sins and living a life of charity. The man in verse 17 failed to confess his sins and died unrepentant. In short, the difference between the man in verse 15 and the man in verse 17 is that the former died in a state of grace and the latter died in a state of mortal sin.

Thus, Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 3:14-17 reveals the three possible conditions of a person's soul at death:

The state of perfect righteousness
(verse 14—the man receives the reward).

The state of venial sin/debt of punishment
(verse 15—the man suffers loss but is still saved).

The state of mortal sin
(verse 17—the man is destroyed).

Two Classes of People?

To get around the obvious continuity of the metaphor, some Protestant apologists try to drive yet another wedge between the saved people in verses 14-15 (who did good works) and the condemned people in verse 17 (who did bad works). Artificially creating two categories of people (the saved and the damned), the Protestant apologist insists that God is punishing those who did bad works and rewarding (but not punishing) those who did good works. Like their false distinction between bad motives and sins, this categorization is

another anachronistic (and redundant) form of argumentation.

We have already demonstrated, through an analysis of the original Greek and Hebrew, that in verse 15 God is punishing the people He ultimately saves. Further, if verses 14-15 were about rewards only and not salvation proper, then there would be nothing about condemnation in verse 17, for condemnation would be completely out of context. As it stands, Paul is referring to exactly the same types of sins (false wisdom and divisive allegiances) both before and after 1 Corinthians 3:15, which means he is speaking to the same people in verses 14-15 and verse 17.²⁰⁷ These sins, which apply to all the Corinthians, destroy the temple of God partially and, if sufficiently egregious, completely.

Not only does Paul fail to make a distinction between the saved and unsaved, Paul doesn't make any distinctions among the Corinthians at all. Paul opens his letter by stating that he is writing "To the church of God which is at Corinth" (1:2). These are the same people whom Paul says has received "spiritual gifts"²⁰⁸ and whom he exhorts to "build up the church,"²⁰⁹ promising that their "labor is not in vain" (1 Cor 15:58). Most critically, Paul brackets his teaching in 1 Corinthians 3:14-17 by calling the Corinthians "God's building" in verse 9 and "God's temple" in verse 17, two metaphors representing the same thing—the Corinthian people.²¹⁰ These statements are bookends to Paul's "judgment by fire" metaphor. This means the metaphor applies equally to all of the Corinthians, without distinction.²¹¹

Thus, God is punishing the men (in verses 15 and 17) who performed evil deeds. The difference is that the punishment in verse 15 is less severe than in verse 17 because the man in verse 15 is saved (though purged by fire) and the man in verse 17 is damned (consumed by fire). The man in verse 15 is like the ignorant and lazy servants who received beatings but live, and the man in verse 17 is like the wicked servant who is condemned. Paul's teaching emphasizes that all deeds, both good and evil, are brought to the judgment seat of Christ, for "he will render to every man according to his works" (Rom 2:6). The good deeds of the saved follow them into heaven, and the bad deeds of the damned torment them in hell.²¹²

In the end, Scripture never makes a distinction among the methods God uses to judge the sinner's good and bad deeds, for all deeds will be "revealed and tested with fire" (1 Cor 3:13). As Isaiah reveals, our "filth" is "washed away" by "a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning" (4:4) and "the Lord shall judge by fire" (66:16). Instead, the focus of Scriptures is on the outcome

of God's judgment. This, as we have seen, means either destruction or reward (with a possible sojourn in purgatory).

We finish our analysis about "suffering loss" looking at how other Scripture verses also connect "suffering" with statements about God's "tests," "trials," and "fire" prior to witnessing the "revelation of Christ" and receiving the "crown of life." These examples further support that the "test" God imposes upon the soul at death in 1 Corinthians 3 results in suffering (not loss of rewards) before one receives eternal salvation:

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while you may have to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold which though perishable is tested by fire, may redound to praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Pet 1:6-7).

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which comes upon you to prove you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice in so far as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed" (1 Pet 4:12-13).

Blessed is the man who endures trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life which God has promised to those who love him (Jas 1:12).

Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.²¹³

Therefore I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, that you may be rich, and white garments to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and chasten; so be zealous and repent (Rev 3:18-19).

The Book of Wisdom provides a beautiful scriptural account of the truth of purgatory.²¹⁴ In the following passage, notice how the sacred author incorporates the various facets of purgatory revealed in the New Testament: departed souls are tested, punished and disciplined for a time, like gold in the furnace is tried by fire, but these souls are at peace because they will receive immortality. Notice also how these souls run like "sparks through the

stubble” which is a clear precedent for Paul’s metaphor of “fire” burning “stubble”:

But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them. In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died, and their departure was thought to be an affliction, and their going from us to be their destruction; but they are at peace. For though in the sight of men they were punished, their hope is full of immortality. Having been disciplined a little, they will receive great good, because God tested them and found them worthy of himself; like gold in the furnace he tried them, and like a sacrificial burnt offering he accepted them. In the time of their visitation they will shine forth, and will run like sparks through the stubble (3:1-7).

1 Corinthians 15:28-29: Baptism on Behalf of the Dead

In chapter 15 of the same First Letter to the Corinthians, Paul makes a much subtler allusion to the condition of departed souls. In this chapter, Paul’s focus is primarily on the resurrection of the dead, but he brings purgatory into his teaching in the applicable verses. Paul begins the chapter by affirming the resurrection of Christ. Then he states that the risen Christ appeared to Peter and the apostles and thereafter to five hundred people at once, before appearing to him, adding that if Christ were not raised from the dead, then the gospel is a fraud and our faith is in vain.

After affirming the doctrine of Original Sin and the redemption, Paul speaks of “the end” where Christ will destroy the powers of darkness and the Father will subject all of Christ’s enemies to His reign. Then, beginning in verse 28, Paul makes a curious statement about “the dead”:

When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things under him, that God may be everything to every one. Otherwise, what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf?

We first note the interesting connection between 1 Corinthians 15:24-25 and Ephesians 1:21-22, the passage we examined earlier when we looked at Matthew 12:32. Both passages reveal that Christ will conquer “every rule and power and authority” after “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.”²¹⁵ We saw in Ephesians that this reign of Christ occurs “in the age to come,” the same age where in Matthew Jesus says there will be “forgiveness

of sin.” It appears, then, that Paul has the forgiveness of sins in the afterlife on his mind, for he immediately follows his teaching about Christ’s reign with references to people “being baptized on behalf of the dead.” What does Paul exactly mean?

While it is not crystal clear, there are a couple of plausible interpretations. One interpretation holds that Paul was referring to the sacrament of Baptism. Some think the early Church had a practice of administering the sacrament on behalf of departed loved ones, just like the Church has always celebrated the Holy Mass on behalf of the faithful departed (we see this in the section on the writings of the Fathers). When Paul says that the church is baptizing “on behalf of” the dead, the Greek word Paul uses (*huper*) may be translated as “for the sake of,” “for the benefit of,” or simply “for.”²¹⁶ In other words, Paul believed that the celebration of the sacrament assisted the dead. Of course, if these dead were in heaven, they’d need no assistance, and if they were in hell, they’d be unable to receive assistance. This must mean that these dead are in purgatory.

Another interpretation is that Paul was using the term “baptism” as a way to describe the various penances the Corinthians performed “on behalf of the dead.”²¹⁷ The New Testament uses the word “baptism” in this way. For example, Scripture refers to the baptism of John as a “baptism for the repentance and forgiveness of sins.”²¹⁸ Jesus also referred to His suffering and death as a type of “baptism.”²¹⁹

Thus, Paul could have been referring to the prayers and penitential works that the church at Corinth was offering for the dead. Whether Paul was speaking specifically of the sacrament of Baptism, or more generally of penances, cannot be known definitively, but one thing is clear: Paul believed that the works of the Corinthians would benefit the faithful departed. Again, if these dead were in heaven, they’d need no further benefit, and if they were in hell, they’d be unable to gain any benefit—therefore they must be in purgatory.

Paul’s teaching in 1 Corinthians 15:29 mirrors the passage from the second Book of Maccabees, which we read in the Preface. In this passage, we see the actions of the great warrior Judas Maccabeus, who fought to preserve Judea from the corruption of the pagan world. After a bloody battle, Judas Maccabeus gathered the dead bodies of his soldiers for burial and made spiritual provisions for them. Here is the expanded passage:

So they all blessed the ways of the Lord, the righteous Judge, who reveals the

things that are hidden; and they turned to prayer, beseeching that the sin which had been committed might be wholly blotted out. And the noble Judas exhorted the people to keep themselves free from sin, for they had seen with their own eyes what had happened because of the sin of those who had fallen. He also took up a collection, man by man, to the amount of two thousand drachmas of silver, and sent it to Jerusalem to provide for a sin offering. In doing this he acted very well and honorably, taking account of the resurrection. For if he were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead. But if he was looking to the splendid reward that is laid up for those who fall asleep in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Therefore he made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin (2 Macc 12:41-45).

We see three elements in this passage that are connected to our study of purgatory. The first element is a reference to the “Judge” who is God. This is the same “Judge” of Matthew 5 who detains us in prison until we have paid the last penny, and who “reveals the things that are hidden” through the fires of His divine justice. Because of His coming judgment, the faithful Jews “turned to prayer, beseeching that the sin which had been committed might be wholly blotted out.” Thus, the author puts this passage in the context of God’s judgment and the forgiveness of sin.

The second element we see is Judas Maccabeus’ performing a ceremony on behalf of the dead. After exhorting the people to be free from sin, Judas takes up a financial collection and sends it to the Temple to pay for a sin offering. A sin offering generally involved the sacrifice of a lamb, goat, bull, or ram according to a specifically prescribed ritual.²²⁰ The sacrifice was offered to appease God’s wrath against the sins of Israel, and, in this case, was also considered a prayer “for the dead.”

The passage closely follows 1 Corinthians 15:29 because Judas, like the Corinthians, performs the ritual by “taking account of the resurrection.” The author says that if Judas wasn’t expecting the dead to rise again, it would have been foolish to pray for them. Paul follows the same train of thought when he says, “If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf?” (1 Cor 15:29).

Paul could have just as easily said, “If the Corinthians were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to baptize on behalf of the dead.” This connection appears to be

more than coincidence, and strongly indicates that Paul had the Maccabean passage in mind when he wrote this passage.²²¹ It certainly follows that Paul viewed the Corinthians' baptisms on behalf of their dead as efficacious, the same way that Judas viewed the prayers and sin offering on behalf of his dead. We also note that the author of Maccabees calls salvation the "splendid reward" just as Paul calls salvation the "reward" in 1 Corinthians 3:14.

This brings us to the third element—why these ceremonies for the dead were performed. The last verse in the passage provides the answer: that the dead "might be delivered from their sin." This verse explicitly professes a belief in purgatory, where the dead are detained in a prison beyond the grave as they pay their debt to the Judge of all men. As the last verse says, the actions of Judas (his prayers and sacrifice) were able to make "atonement for the dead." That is, Judas was able to make satisfaction for the temporal punishments the deceased were required to undergo in the afterlife (more on how we can atone for others sins in the next chapter). As we have said before, there is no need for forgiveness of sin in heaven, and no possibility of forgiveness of sin in hell. Judas was praying and making atonement for the souls in purgatory.²²²

Even if Protestants do not accept the canonicity of the books of Maccabees, they can see that purgatory is not a Catholic invention. God revealed the truth of purgatory to the Jews long before the coming of Christ. Moreover, there are other examples in the Old Testament scriptures (those that Protestants accept as canonical) of ritual prayer and penitent mourning for the dead for specific periods of time.²²³ The Jews understood that these practices freed the departed souls from their painful state of purification and expedited their journey to God. This is why Naomi cried out, "Blessed be he by the Lord, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead!" (Ruth 2:20). The Jews would perform acts of kindness for the dead to free them from their sufferings. Hence, the Book of Sirach says, "Graciously give to all the living, and withhold not kindness from the dead."²²⁴

2 Timothy 1:16-18: Finding Mercy on that Day

In his second letter to Timothy, whom Paul ordained a bishop at Ephesus around A.D. 65, Paul says a lot about apostolic authority in the Church. Referring to Timothy's ordination, Paul reminds Timothy to "rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands" (1:6). Paul then

instructs Timothy to follow, guard, and transmit to future generations the oral Tradition that he received from Paul.²²⁵ In addition to following oral Tradition and Paul's own example, Paul also instructs Timothy to preach the Word and use Sacred Scripture.²²⁶ Paul further warns Timothy to be careful of evil people who disregard apostolic authority and upset the Faith.²²⁷

Paul's friend Onesiphorus was definitely not one of those people. While we don't know much about him, we do know that he was of great service to Paul during his missions and to the church at Ephesus. Paul writes: May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me; he was not ashamed of my chains, but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me eagerly and found me— may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that Day—and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus.²²⁸

In this passage, we once again see Paul referring to “that Day.” We have already examined a number of Scripture passages that demonstrate that the “Day” refers to God's judgment on the individual soul, so there is no need to repeat the analysis here.²²⁹ We can be particularly certain that Paul is referring to Onesiphorus's Particular Judgment because Paul uses the exact same Greek phrase, “on that Day,” to describe his own Particular Judgment later in the same letter, when God will have “laid up for me the crown of righteousness.”²³⁰

We do not know from Scripture whether Onesiphorus is dead when Paul is writing his letter. Protestants who oppose purgatory often argue that Onesiphorus is not dead because there is evidence in the historical record that he was martyred in A.D. 81 under the Emperor Domitian, years after Paul was martyred in Rome. Catholics have no objection to this assertion. Whether Onesiphorus is dead or alive is not relevant to the question of purgatory. Whether Onesiphorus's “Day” had already come is not Paul's concern. Rather, Paul's focus is on imploring God to have mercy on Onesiphorus on “that Day,” whenever that Day is to come.

Because “that Day” refers to Onesiphorus's Particular Judgment, as we have seen from other Scriptures, why is Paul asking the Lord to have mercy on him? From a Protestant perspective, this need for mercy is particularly confusing given Onesiphorus's status in the Christian community. Onesiphorus is described as a valiant Christian minister. He often “refreshed” Paul and was not “ashamed” of imprisonment for the gospel. He also “searched eagerly” for Paul in Rome and found him, and everyone knew the

great “service” he rendered at Ephesus. His martyrdom would only testify to the fact that this was a man of great grace, who persevered in faith, hope, and charity to the end of his life.

If Onesiphorus was so good, we might ask Protestants, then why would Paul ask God to have mercy on him? Wasn’t Onesiphorus already saved by “faith alone,” and don’t his good works simply testify to his status as an already-saved Christian? Wouldn’t Onesiphorus be covered with the imputed righteousness of Christ on “that Day,” which would make Paul’s request for mercy superfluous? Whether Onesiphorus is dead or alive, this short passage says a lot in support of the Catholic view of purgatory and salvation.

First, it says that Onesiphorus, as a “saved” Christian, could still have sinned against the Faith, which is why Paul asks God for mercy on his judgment day. In other words, Paul believes that Onesiphorus could have done something to jeopardize his salvation in the eyes of God, just as Paul believed (in 1 Corinthians 9:27) that he himself could become a reprobate. That is why Paul asks God for mercy. Secondly, Paul’s prayer for mercy tells us that prayer assists Onesiphorus in the afterlife. Because it is a prayer for mercy “in that Day,” it is directed at appeasing God for Onesiphorus’s sins, for that is the goal of such prayers. Paul was simply following Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 12:32, which says that there is forgiveness of sin in “the age to come,” and that is the age of purgatory.

Hebrews 12:22-24: Even Just Men Are “Made Perfect”

Paul’s Letter to the Hebrews is one of the most theologically rich epistles in the New Testament. Paul dedicates a large part of the letter to explaining the heavenly priesthood of Jesus Christ.²³¹ Paul emphasizes that Jesus exercises His priesthood in the same manner as that of Melchizedek, the first priest mentioned in the Old Testament who offered a sacrifice of bread and wine.²³² In the heavenly liturgy, Jesus our High Priest presents His eternal sacrifice to the Father and through the priests of the New Covenant under the appearance of bread and wine.

In chapter 12, Paul reveals to the Hebrews that their earthly liturgy is an actual participation in the heavenly liturgy where the angels and saints worship God through the mediation of Jesus Christ and His shed blood:

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the

assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel.

Among those who are present at the heavenly liturgy are “the spirits of just men made perfect.” Paul’s use of “spirits of the just” reminds us of Peter’s reference to the “spirits in prison” to whom Jesus preached the gospel during His descent into the abode of the dead.²³³ Paul says that these “spirits,” which exist in the eternal realm, are “made perfect.” They do not necessarily arrive in eternity in perfect condition. This, of course, is because most people do not achieve spiritual perfection during their earthly lives. Thus, Paul is alluding to the “spirits” (souls) who have been “made perfect” in the “prison” of purgatory. This perfection comes about by virtue of Jesus’ heavenly priesthood, which is the focus of Paul’s letter.

The original language lends further support to our conclusion. The Greek transliteration for the verb “made perfect” in Hebrews 12:23 is *teleioo*, which means to perfect something by “completing it” or “bringing it to an end.” Because it is a perfect past participle (literally, “having been matured”), this verb means that these souls have been perfected prior to their arrival in “the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.” Yet, because Paul is referring to the “spirits” of these perfected ones indicates that these souls were perfected after having left their bodies in death. In other words, the perfect past participle connotes that the “spirits” were perfected as spirits—that is, in eternity—and that the effects of their perfection continue in eternity. Thus, Paul’s usage reveals that the spirits of these just men have been perfected beyond the grave, but before reaching heaven: which means in purgatory.

Paul uses this verb (*teleioo*) in regard to achieving perfection eight other times in his letter to the Hebrews. In each case, the “perfection” Paul describes is either connected to “suffering”²³⁴ or to “sacrifices.”²³⁵ It follows that the perfection of the “spirits of the just men” in Hebrews 12:23 is also connected to suffering and sacrifice—the sufferings they have endured in purgatory and the sacrifices that were offered to deliver them. In fact, at the beginning of chapter 12, Paul repeatedly refers to how God “disciplines,” “punishes” and “chastises” his sons so that “we may share his holiness,” which is necessary to see God.²³⁶ Paul also refers to God, who is doing the disciplining, as “the Father of spirits” (12:9). These “spirits” in verse 9 are the same “spirits” in verse 23 who are made perfect by the Father’s

chastisements in eternity. Finally, chapter 12 concludes by describing God as “a consuming fire”—the very fire that perfects the “spirits of the just men” in purgatory.

The Teachings of the Church Fathers

We now turn to the writings of the early Church Fathers. We call these pioneering Christians “Fathers” because they are our spiritual fathers in the faith. They were the closest to Christ, the apostles, and the original transmission of the gospel. They were the men who wrote the first commentaries on Scripture, organized the Church’s earliest councils, and helped formulate the core dogmatic teachings of Christianity that even most Protestants accept (the Trinity, the two natures and wills of Christ, the hypostatic union, etc.). They also had one thing in common: they all claimed membership in the Catholic Church, “the pinnacle and bulwark of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15). That is because there was no other “church” around.

Because the writings of the Fathers pose so many problems for Protestant theology, many Protestants are quick to dismiss their writings as “extra-biblical tradition.” Such a dismissal, however, is contrary to the mandate of Scripture itself. As we have mentioned, Paul commands us to obey both the written and the oral revelation which we have received from Christ and the apostles.²³⁷ The oral revelation, which we call Sacred Tradition, has been preserved in the writings of the Church Fathers, as well as in the Church’s councils, catechisms, and liturgies. God has entrusted both the oral and written revelation to the Church that Christ built upon the rock of Peter and his successors, the Roman Catholic Church (Mt 16:18). This is why Peter says, “Scripture is not a matter of one’s own interpretation” (2 Pet 1:20). Instead, Scripture is a matter of the public interpretation of the Church, to which Christ gave the authority to bind and loose (Cf. Mt 16:19; 18:18).

Some Protestants characterize the Patristic writings as inaccurate and even fraudulent. Catholics find such charges quite curious. Protestants have no problem with putting their complete faith in Scripture, even though we do not have any of the original autographs of Scripture, but rather only copies that are replete with textual variations. One might say there is more consistency in the manuscripts of the Fathers than in Scripture itself, yet Protestants have no problem dismissing the former as unreliable but not the latter. Although Scripture is inspired by God and the writings of the Fathers are not, the

Patristic writings bear witness to the early Church's interpretation of the Scriptures, and are, historically speaking, just as authentic as the copies of the Scriptures themselves.

It is critical to note that the Church Fathers were unanimous in their belief in purgatory. Although the Fathers expressed themselves differently about the doctrine, they all believed in a place of purgation after death, which they gleaned from the Scriptures we have just examined. In fact, there is more Patristic evidence supporting the doctrine of purgatory than there is for the core dogmas of the Trinity or Christology. As we have said, the doctrine of purgatory was never seriously questioned until the Protestant theological revolt in the sixteenth century. Given the abundance of biblical and patristic support for the doctrine, it is truly remarkable how the "Reformers" set aside this perennial teaching, and how many Christians of today are unaware of these basic historical facts.

If the Protestant wishes to dismiss the writings of the Fathers on purgatory, on what basis does he accept their writings on the Trinity or the Incarnation? On what basis does he accept their writings on heaven and hell? I pose these questions to underscore the futility of the private judgment theology of Protestantism. If one wishes to dismiss the Fathers' writings, then he is either burying his head in the sand or accusing the earliest Christian leaders of falling into mass apostasy.²³⁸ To argue that the Fathers were wrong about purgatory is essentially to argue that Christ abandoned His Church from the beginning, even though Jesus promised that the gates of hell would not prevail against His Church (cf. Mt 16:18).

The unanimous interpretation of the Fathers is further supported by the inscriptions on the tombs, sepulchers, and catacombs of the first martyrs and departed faithful of the Catholic Church. In many of these inscriptions, some dating back to the first century, the deceased Christians beg for the prayers of the living. In his study of the inscriptions of many catacombs in Rome, Fr. John O'Brien saw the last words of the dying Christians: "In your prayers remember us who have gone before you."²³⁹ These inscriptions reveal the early Church's belief in purgatory and the efficacy of prayers to assist the dead. Father A.S. Barnes has compiled many of these inscriptions from the first three centuries of the Church in his book *The Early Church in the Light of the Monuments*.²⁴⁰

The earliest liturgies of the Church also reflect a belief in purgatory. From the very beginning, the Church in the Holy Mass would remember the

faithful departed, with prayers for their peace and the forgiveness of their sins. One of the oldest liturgies, attributed to the Apostle James, contains the prayer, “We commemorate all the faithful dead who have died in the true faith . . . We ask, we entreat, we pray Christ our God, who took their souls and spirits to Himself, that by His many compassions He will make them worthy of the pardon of their faults and the remission of their sins.”²⁴¹

In the fourth century, Cyril of Jerusalem expressed the Church’s belief that “the souls of those for whom prayers are offered [during Mass] receive very great relief.” In the Traditional Latin Mass, which was originally composed by Peter and Paul in Rome, the priest offers the sacrifice “for the living and the dead, that it may avail both me and them for salvation unto life everlasting.” The priest also asks God to grant to the dead “a place of refreshment, light, and peace.”

Let us now examine some of the writings of the Church Fathers, in chronological order, with some commentary along the way. You’ll see that their interpretations of Scripture only echo the exegesis we have offered in this and previous chapters. Please also note that this is just a sampling of the writings of the Fathers on the topic of purgatory. I’d encourage you to consult the bibliography at the end of this chapter for further study not only about the dogma of purgatory, but also about the other core dogmas of the Catholic faith (all believed by the Fathers).

The Acts of Paul and Thecla

Early Christian writing, c.160

And after the exhibition, Tryphaena again received her [Thecla]. For her daughter Falconilla had died, and said to her in a dream: ‘Mother, you shall have this stranger Thecla in my place, in order that she may pray concerning me, and that I may be transferred to the place of the just.’²⁴²

COMMENTARY: Here we see, in the second century, the early Christians’ belief in a state in the afterlife that is neither heaven nor hell. The departed Falconilla reveals to her mother Tryphaena that she is in purgatory and that Thecla’s prayers can assist her. Through Thecla’s prayers, Falconilla knows that she will be “transferred” from purgatory to heaven, the “place of the just.”

Abercius

Bishop of Hierpolis, d.167

The citizen of a prominent city, I erected this while I lived, that I might have a resting place for my body. Abercius is my name, a disciple of the chaste Shepherd who feeds his sheep on the mountains and in the fields, who has great eyes surveying everywhere, who taught me the faithful writings of life. Standing by, I, Abercius, ordered this to be inscribed: Truly, I was in the course of my seventy-second year. May everyone who is in accord with this and who understands it pray for Abercius. *Inscription of Abercius (A.D. 190)*

COMMENTARY: This is another second-century example of the early Christians' belief in purgatory. Abercius inscribed on his epitaph a request for prayers for his soul. All Christians believed that these prayers could assist the dead by helping to make satisfaction for the sins that detained them in purgatory.

The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity

Early Christian martyrs at Carthage, d.203

Without delay, on that very night, this was shown to me in a vision: I [Perpetua] saw Dinocrates going out from a gloomy place, where also there were several others, and he was parched and very thirsty, with a filthy countenance and pallid color, and the wound on his face which he had when he died. This Dinocrates had been my brother after the flesh, seven years of age, who died miserably with disease . . . For him I had made my prayer, and between him and me there was a large interval, so that neither of us could approach to the other . . . and [I] knew that my brother was in suffering. But I trusted that my prayer would bring help to his suffering; and I prayed for him every day until we passed over into the prison of the camp, for we were to fight in the camp-show. Then . . . I made my prayer for my brother day and night, groaning and weeping that he might be granted to me.

Then, on the day on which we remained in fetters, this was shown to me: I saw that that place which I had formerly observed to be in gloom was now bright; and Dinocrates, with a clean body well clad, was finding refreshment. And where there had been a wound, I saw a scar; and that pool which I had before seen, I saw now with its margin lowered even to the boy's navel. And one drew water from the pool incessantly, and upon its brink was a goblet filled with water; and Dinocrates drew near and began to drink from it, and the goblet did not fail. And when he was satisfied, he went away from the water to play joyously, after the manner of children, and I awoke. Then I understood that he was translated from the place of punishment. *The*

Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas (A.D. 203)

COMMENTARY: In this vision, Perpetua sees her deceased brother Dinocrates suffering the torments of purgatory. Perpetua even describes it as the “the place of punishment.” Dinocrates was parched and thirsty with a filthy and wounded appearance. Perpetua also reveals that a large chasm separated her from her brother, just as Lazarus was separated from the rich man in Luke 16:26. Perpetua also expresses confidence that her prayers would “bring help to his suffering.” Perpetua seems to allude to the process of Dinocrates’s purification when she says his appearance had changed and he was finding refreshment. In the end, Perpetua reveals that Dinocrates was “translated” from his punishments to a state of joy.

Clement of Alexandria

Theologian, d.215

Accordingly the believer, through great discipline, divesting himself of the passions, passes to the mansion which is better than the former one, viz., to the greatest torment, taking with him the characteristic of repentance from the sins he *has* committed after baptism. He is tortured then still more—not yet or not quite attaining what he sees others to have acquired. Besides, he is also ashamed of his transgressions. The greatest torments, indeed, are assigned to the believer. For God’s righteousness is good, and His goodness is righteous. And though the punishments cease in the course of the completion of the expiation and purification of each one, yet those have very great and permanent grief who are found worthy of the other fold, on account of not being along with those that have been glorified through righteousness.”

Stromata, 6:14 (ante A.D. 202)

COMMENTARY: Clement is writing about the pains of purgatory, which he describes as “torture” for the “sins” (works, deeds, bad materials) the departed committed during his lifetime. Clement is clear that these post-death sufferings are temporal and not eternal, for they cease after the expiation of sin is completed, and then the person passes to the “better mansion.”

Tertullian

Theologian, d. c.225

“[T]hat allegory of the Lord which is extremely clear and simple in its meaning, and ought to be from the first understood in its plain and natural sense . . . Then, again, should you be disposed to apply the term “adversary” to the devil, you are advised by the [Lord’s] injunction, while you are in the way with him, to make even with him such a compact as may be deemed compatible with the requirements of your true faith. Now the compact you

have made respecting him is to renounce him, and his pomp, and his angels. Such is your agreement in this matter. Now the friendly understanding you will have to carry out must arise from your observance of the compact: you must never think of getting back any of the things which you have abjured, and have restored to him, lest he should summon you as a fraudulent man, and a transgressor of your agreement, before God the Judge (for in this light do we read of him, in another passage, as “the accuser of the brethren,” or saints, where reference is made to the actual practice of legal prosecution); and lest this Judge deliver you over to the angel who is to execute the sentence, and he commit you to the prison of hell, out of which there will be no dismissal until the smallest even of your delinquencies be paid off in the period before the resurrection. What can be a more fitting sense than this? What a truer interpretation? *A Treatise on the Soul*, 35 (A.D. 210)

COMMENTARY: Tertullian provides us with the earliest interpretation of Matthew 5:25-26, which he deems to be clear, simple, and self-evident. As we saw earlier, the “accuser” is the devil, whom we are to renounce in this life. If we fail to do so, the Judge will hand us over to an angel who will confine us to the “prison” of hell (Hades) where we will make satisfaction for even our smallest faults. It is clear that this post-mortem place of detention is not the eternal hell of the reprobate, for there will be “dismissal” after the delinquencies are satisfied.

All souls, therefore, are shut up within Hades: do you admit this? [It is true, whether] you say yes or no: moreover, there are already experienced there punishments and consolations; and there you have a poor man and a rich . . . Moreover, the soul executes not all its operations with the ministration of the flesh; for the judgment of God pursues even simple cogitations and the merest volitions. “Whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her, has committed adultery with her already in his heart.” Therefore, even for this cause it is most fitting that the soul, without at all waiting for the flesh, should be punished for what it has done without the partnership of the flesh. So, on the same principle, in return for the pious and kindly thoughts in which it shared not the help of the flesh, shall it without the flesh receive its consolation. In short, inasmuch as we understand “the prison” pointed out in the Gospel to be Hades, and as we also interpret “the uttermost farthing” [the last penny] to mean the very smallest offense which has to be recompensed there before the resurrection, no one will hesitate to believe that the soul undergoes in Hades some compensatory discipline, without prejudice to the full process of the resurrection, when the recompense will be administered through the flesh besides. *A Treatise on the Soul*, 58 (A.D. 210)

COMMENTARY: Tertullian seems to believe the rich man of Luke 16 is in purgatory (which he calls Hades) because the rich man (often referred to as “Dives”) is with him. Note how he focuses on

God's judgment of the individual soul and how the soul is punished after death for even mental infractions (lust). This emphasizes how God looks into the soul of man as He judges him, and not to an imputed righteousness that covers the soul. He also interprets Matthew 5:25-26 to be about purgatory and emphasizes that the soul is caused to make satisfaction for the sins committed in the body which is represented by the payment of debt.

As often as the anniversary comes round, we make offerings for the dead as birthday honors. *The Chaplutee*, 3 (A.D. 211)

COMMENTARY: Tertullian acknowledges the Church's perennial custom of offering sacrifices (that is, the Eucharistic sacrifice) for the dead, just as Judas Maccabeus offered a sacrifice for the dead. Since the very beginning, the Church would make offerings for the dead to loose them from their sins.

[A] woman is more bound when her husband is dead. . . Indeed, she prays for his soul, and requests refreshment for him . . . and fellowship with him in the first resurrection; and she offers the sacrifice on the anniversary of his falling asleep. *On Monogamy*, 10 (A.D. 216)

COMMENTARY: Tertullian is clear that the Christian prays and offers sacrifice for the souls of departed loved ones. There is no need to offer prayers for those in heaven or hell, which means these prayers are for the souls in purgatory.

Origen Theologian, d.254

For if on the foundation of Christ you have built not only gold and silver and precious stones, but also wood and hay and stubble, what do you expect when the soul shall be separated from the body? Would you enter into heaven with your wood and hay and stubble and thus defile the kingdom of God; or on account of these hindrances would you remain without and receive no reward for your gold and silver and precious stones; neither is this just. It remains then that you be committed to the fire which will burn the light materials, for our God to those who can comprehend heavenly things is called a cleansing fire. But this fire consumes not the creature, but what the creature has himself built, wood, and hay and stubble. It is manifest that the fire destroys the wood of our transgressions and then returns to us the reward of our great works."

Homilies on Jeremiah, PG 13:445,448 (A.D. 244)

COMMENTARY: Origen interprets 1 Corinthians 3:14-15 to be a revelation of purgatory, and holds that purgatory is necessary as a matter of justice. He equates the wood, hay, and stubble with our "transgressions" (sins), which God purges with His "cleansing fire." It is only after the purgation is completed that the soul receives its reward.

Cyprian of Carthage

Bishop and Martyr, d.258

It is one thing to stand for pardon, another thing to attain to glory: it is one

thing, when cast into prison, not to go out thence until one has paid the uttermost farthing [last penny]; another thing at once to receive the wages of faith and courage. It is one thing, tortured by long suffering for sins, to be cleansed and long purged by fire; another to have purged all sins by suffering. It is one thing, in fine, to be in suspense till the sentence of God at the day of judgment; another to be at once crowned by the Lord. *To Antonianus, Epistle 51(55):20 (A.D. 253)*

COMMENTARY: Cyprian is speaking about the difference between gaining heaven immediately and having to go to purgatory first. He equates purgatory with “pardon,” which means venial (not mortal) sin is forgiven. He also interprets Matthew 5:25-26 to be an allusion to purgatory when he references the “prison” and payment of the last “farthing.” He further describes purgatory as “torture” and “suffering” for “sin” through purgation by “fire.”

Apostolic Constitutions

Early collection of Christian writings, c.350

Let us pray for our brethren that are at rest in Christ, that God, the lover of mankind, who has received his soul, may forgive him every sin, voluntary and involuntary, and may be merciful and gracious to him, and give him his lot in the land of the pious that are sent into the bosom of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, with all those that have pleased Him and done His will from the beginning of the world, whence all sorrow, grief, and lamentation are banished. *Apostolic Constitutions, 8:4,41*

COMMENTARY: This passage clearly demonstrates the early Church’s belief in purgatory. The author exhorts us to pray for the souls of the dead that they may be forgiven of sin. The author’s reference to “involuntary” sin refers to the dispositions of the soul and a failure to master concupiscence.

Lactantius

Theologian, d.325

The same divine fire, therefore, with one and the same force and power, will both burn the wicked and will form them again, and will replace as much as it shall consume of their bodies, and will supply itself with eternal nourishment: which the poets transferred to the vulture of Tityus. Thus, without any wasting of bodies, which regain their substance, it will only burn and affect them with a sense of pain. But when He shall have judged the righteous, He will also try them with fire. Then they whose sins shall exceed either in

weight or in number, shall be scorched by the fire and burnt: but they whom full justice and maturity of virtue has imbued will not perceive that fire; for they have something of God in themselves which repels and rejects the violence of the flame. *The Divine Institutes*, 7:21 (A.D. 307)

COMMENTARY: Lactantius indicates that the fires of hell and purgatory are the same, but with different effects—the former consumes and the latter purges. He is clear that the righteous are tried by fire after their death on account of their sins. He also notes that those who have reached perfection are not burned by the fire. This is consistent with 1 Corinthians 3:15—the man must pass through the fire only if he has built with faulty materials.

Cyril of Jerusalem

Bishop and Doctor of the Church, d.386

Then we commemorate also those who have fallen asleep before us: first, the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, that at their prayers and intercessions God would receive our petition. Then on behalf also of the holy Fathers and bishops who have fallen asleep before us, and in a word of all who in past years have fallen asleep among us, believing that it will be a very great benefit to the souls, for whom the supplication is put up, while that holy and most awful sacrifice is set forth. And I wish to persuade you by an illustration. For I know that many say, what is a soul profited, which departs from this world either with sins, or without sins, if it be commemorated in the prayer? For if a king were to banish certain who had given him offense, and then those who belong to them should weave a crown and offer it to him on behalf of those under punishment, would he not grant a remission of their penalties? In the same way we, when we offer to Him our supplications for those who have fallen asleep, though they be sinners, weave no crown, but offer up Christ sacrificed for our sins, propitiating our merciful God for them as well as for ourselves. *Catechetical Lectures*, 23:9, 10 (c. A.D. 350)

COMMENTARY: Cyril explains that Christians pray for the dead (those who have “fallen asleep”) and that these prayers are beneficial to the departed souls because of their sins. He also likens the condition of the departed souls to those who suffer “punishment” and “penalties” under the direction of a king (an allusion to Christ). He further mentions the chief of all prayers for the dead, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass (the “most awful sacrifice”) where Christ is “sacrificed for our sins” to “propitiate” God’s wrath.

Basil

Bishop and Doctor of the Church, d.379

I think that the noble athletes of God, who have wrestled all their lives with the invisible enemies, after they have escaped all of their persecutions and have come to the end of life, are examined by the prince of this world and, if they are found to have any wounds from their wrestling, any stains or effects of sin, they are detained. If, however, they are found unwounded and without stain, they are, as unconquered, brought by Christ into their rest. *Homilies on the Psalms, 7:2 (ante A.D. 370)*

COMMENTARY: Basil describes what happens to those who die with either the stain of sin (“unconquered” concupiscence) or the effects of sin (the debts of temporal punishment). If souls are found with these wounds at the judgment, they are “detained,” which is a clear reference to the “prison” of Matthew 5:25-26. If souls are found without these wounds (they built only with gold, silver, precious stones), then they immediately enter heaven.

Ephraem

Theologian, d.373

Lay me not with sweet spices, for this honor avails me not; Nor yet incense and perfumes, for the honor benefits me not. Burn sweet spices in the Holy Place, and me, even me, conduct to the grave with prayer. Give incense to God and over me send up hymns. Instead of perfumes of spices, in prayer make remembrance of me. *His Testament (ante A.D. 373)*

COMMENTARY: Ephraem emphasizes the importance of prayer and offerings for the benefit of his departed soul. He values prayer more than the honors traditionally bestowed on the deceased (spices, incense, perfumes). We repeat ourselves again: prayer is unnecessary for the souls in heaven, and ineffective to help the souls in hell.

Epiphanius

Bishop and Monk, d.403

Useful too is the prayer fashioned on their behalf [of the dead], even if it does not force back the whole of guilty charges laid to them. And it is useful also, because in this world we often stumble either voluntarily or involuntarily, and thus it is a reminder to do better. *Panarion, 75:8 (A.D. 375)*

COMMENTARY: Epiphanius confirms the early Church’s practice of praying for the dead, which makes satisfaction for some, if not all, of the guilt of their sins. He also alludes to the internal dimension of sin (“voluntary” through deeds or “involuntary” through concupiscence) which bears upon whether or not we will suffer in purgatory. Praying for the dead is “useful” not only for the departed, but for the living as well, because it reminds us to do good in this life so that we don’t have to suffer in the next life.

Gregory of Nyssa

Bishop, d. c.395

If a man distinguish in himself what is peculiarly human from that which is irrational, and if he be on the watch for a life of greater urbanity for himself, in this present life he will purify himself of any evil contracted, overcoming the irrational by reason. If he has inclined to the irrational pressure of the passions, using for the passions the cooperating hide of things irrational, he may afterward in a quite different manner be very much interested in what is better, when, after his departure out of the body, he gains knowledge of the difference between virtue and vice and finds that he is not able to partake of divinity until he has been purged of the filthy contagion in his soul by the purifying fire. *Sermon on the Dead, PG 13:445,448 (ante A.D. 394)*

COMMENTARY: Gregory emphasizes the tension between the spirit and the flesh, between reason and the passions. He teaches that giving in to the temptations of the passions causes a “filthy contagion in his soul” which we have referred to as the stain or remnants of sin. Gregory is clear that this defilement of soul must be “purged” in the “purifying fire” after death before one can be admitted to heaven. He also indicates that we would rather suffer in this life by overcoming these weaknesses than be purged of them by fire in the next life.

Ambrose

Bishop and Doctor of the Church, d.397

Blessed shall both of you be [departed Gratian and Valentinian], if my prayers can avail anything. No day shall pass you over in silence. No prayer of mine shall omit to honor you. No night shall hurry by without bestowing on you a mention in my prayers. In every one of the oblations will I remember you.” *De obitu Valent (A.D. 387)*

COMMENTARY: Ambrose follows the apostolic practice of the Church in offering prayers and oblations (the Sacrifice of the Mass) for the dead, this time for deceased Roman emperors Valentinian and Gratian. These prayers are not merely to honor the dead, but also to free them from their sins, which is why they are offered in union with “the oblations.”

Give, Oh Lord, rest to your servant Theodosius, that rest you have prepared for your saints . . . I love him, therefore will I follow him to the land of the living; I will not leave him till by my prayers and lamentations he shall be admitted unto the holy mount of the Lord, to which his deserts call him. *De obitu Theodosii, PL 16:1397 (A.D. 395)*

COMMENTARY: Ambrose calls his deceased friend Theodosius a “servant” of God who is among God’s “saints.” Yet, Ambrose believes that Theodosius has not yet made it to heaven. Of

course, Theodosius would have been immediately admitted to heaven if he were covered with Christ's righteousness at his Particular Judgment. Instead, it is by Ambrose's prayers and sufferings that Theodosius will be admitted into the house of the Lord.

Jerome

Confessor and Doctor of the Church d.420

Other husbands scatter on the graves of their wives violets, roses, lilies, and purple flowers; and assuage the grief of their hearts by fulfilling this tender duty. Our dear Pammachius also waters the holy ashes and the revered bones of Paulina, but it is with the balm of almsgiving. *To Pammachius, Epistle 66:5 (A.D. 397)*

COMMENTARY: Jerome reveals the early Church's practice of honoring the dead. This practice includes revering the remains (bones, hair, clothing) of the holy faithful departed, which the Church calls "relics." Jerome also reveals that Pammachius assists the soul of Paulina with "almsgiving." As we will see in the next chapter, almsgiving, like prayer, is a principle way in which we are able to make satisfaction for the sins of the members of Christ's body, which includes the souls in purgatory.

John Chrysostom

Bishop and Doctor of the Church, d.407

Mourn for those who have died in wealth, and did not from their wealth think of any solace for their soul, who had power to wash away their sins and would not. Let us all weep for these in private and in public, but with propriety, with gravity, not so as to make exhibitions of ourselves; let us weep for these, not one day, or two, but all our life. Such tears spring not from senseless passion, but from true affection. The other sort are of senseless passion. For this cause they are quickly quenched, whereas if they spring from the fear of God, they always abide with us. Let us weep for these; let us assist them according to our power; let us think of some assistance for them, small though it be, yet still let us assist them. How and in what way? By praying and entreating others to make prayers for them, by continually giving to the poor on their behalf. *Homilies on Philippians, 3 (ante A.D. 404)*

COMMENTARY: Chrysostom is speaking of the departed souls who need our intercession. He first mentions those who have died without sufficiently washing away their sins. He then says we must weep for them and assist them all the days of our life, according to our abilities. Chrysostom says that this assistance includes prayer and, like Jerome, giving alms to the poor. Through these penances, we are able to help free the dead from the sins they failed to "wash away" during their lives.

Monica

Mother of Augustine, d.387

Lay this body anywhere; let not the care of it in any way disturb you. This only I request of you, that you would remember me at the altar of the Lord, wherever you be. *Augustine's Confessions (A.D. 397)*

COMMENTARY: In this request to her son Augustine, Monica professes the apostolic Faith of the Church. She beseeches Augustine, a priest of God, to remember her soul during the Sacrifice of the Mass. This request reflects Monica's belief in purgatory.

Augustine

Bishop and Doctor of the Church, d.430

I, therefore, O God of my heart, do now beseech you for the sins of my mother. Hear me through the medicine of the wounds that hung upon the wood . . . May she, then, be in peace with her husband . . . And inspire, my Lord . . . your servants, my brethren, whom with voice and heart and pen I serve, that as many as shall read these words, may *remember at your altar, Monica, your servant. Confessions (A.D. 397)*

COMMENTARY: In this touching prayer, Augustine responds to his mother's request by imploring the Lord to forgive his mother's sins after her death. Even though Monica faithfully served God all her life (including praying thirty years for the conversion of her son), Augustine does not believe that her sins were completely washed away by "faith alone" or that her soul was "covered" with Christ's righteousness. He, like his mother, believed in the Church's dogma of purgatory.

There is an ecclesiastical discipline, as the faithful know, when the names of the martyrs are read aloud in that place at the altar of God, where prayer is not offered for them. Prayer, however, is offered for other dead who are remembered. It is wrong to pray for a martyr, to whose prayers we ought ourselves be commended. *Sermons 159:1 (A.D. 411)*

COMMENTARY: Augustine affirms the Church's practice of praying for the dead at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The sacrifice of the Mass, which renews Christ's sacrifice on Calvary, satisfies God's justice, and God responds by forgiving the sins of the faithful departed (more on the Mass in the next chapter). Augustine also affirms the Church's belief of praying to the saints in heaven (here, the martyrs).

But by the prayers of the holy Church, and by the salvific sacrifice, and by the alms which are given for their spirits, there is no doubt that the dead are aided, that the Lord might deal more mercifully with them than their sins would deserve. The whole Church observes this practice which was handed down by the Fathers: that it prays for those who have died in the communion

of the Body and Blood of Christ, when they are commemorated in their own place in the sacrifice itself; and the sacrifice is offered also in memory of them, on their behalf. If, then, works of mercy are celebrated for the sake of those who are being remembered, who would hesitate to recommend them, on whose behalf prayers to God are not offered in vain? It is not at all to be doubted that such prayers are of profit to the dead; but for such of them as lived before their death in a way that makes it possible for these things to be useful to them after death. *Sermons, 172:2 (A.D. 411)*

COMMENTARY: Augustine is clear that offering prayers, alms, and the Holy Mass for departed souls is the practice of the “whole Church” which was “handed down by the Fathers”; that is, which comes from the apostles themselves. He indicates that these “works of mercy” appease God so that He can forgive the sins of the departed in the afterlife. Augustine is also speaking of those dead who “died in the communion of the Body and Blood of Christ”—those who professed the Catholic faith.

That there should be some fire even after this life is not incredible, and it can be inquired into and either be discovered or left hidden whether some of the faithful may be saved, some more slowly and some more quickly in the greater or lesser degree in which they loved the good things that perish, through a certain purgatorial fire. This cannot, however, be the case of any of those of whom it is said, that they “shall not inherit the kingdom of God,” unless after suitable repentance their sins be forgiven them. *Handbook on Faith, Hope, and Charity, 18:69 (A.D. 421)*

COMMENTARY: Here Augustine affirms our exegesis of 1 Corinthians 3:15: that some of the faithful are “saved through fire” in the afterlife. He also affirms that this fiery post-death purification is a process whereby some are saved “more slowly” or “more quickly” to the degree to which they built with faulty materials (that is, loved the things that were burned up in the fire). Augustine is clear to distinguish these purgatorial punishments from the punishments of the reprobate.

The time which interposes between the death of a man and the final resurrection holds souls in hidden retreats, accordingly as each is deserving of rest or of hardship, in view of what it merited when it was living in the flesh. Nor can it be denied that the souls of the dead find relief through the piety of their friends and relatives who are still alive, when the Sacrifice of the Mediator [Mass] is offered for them, or when alms are given in the Church. But these things are of profit to those who, when they were alive, merited that they might afterward be able to be helped by these things. There is a certain manner of living, neither so good that there is no need of these helps after death, nor yet so wicked that these helps are of no avail after death. *Handbook on Faith, Hope and Charity, 29:109 (A.D. 421)*

COMMENTARY: Augustine explains that between death and resurrection certain souls are detained (“held”) to make satisfaction for the deeds they committed while in the body. He also affirms that prayer, almsgiving, and the Sacrifice of the Mass “profit” the dead. Augustine concludes by pointing out the justice of purgatory, which demands a “manner of living” that warrants neither the

immediate bliss of heaven nor the eternal penalty of hell.

If the baptized person fulfills the obligations demanded of a Christian, he does well. If he does not—provided he keeps the faith, without which he would perish forever—no matter in what sin or impurity remains, he will be saved, as it were, by fire; as one who has built on the foundation, which is Christ, not gold, silver, and precious stones, but wood, hay, straw, that is, not just and chaste works but wicked and unchaste works. *Faith and Works, 1:1 (A.D. 413)*

COMMENTARY: Augustine again asserts that certain souls are saved “by fire” in accordance with their sins. He also equates the good materials of 1 Corinthians 3:15 with “just and chaste works” and the bad materials with “wicked and unchaste works.” Thus, Augustine affirms that the type of works one performs during his life will determine not only his salvation but the degree to which he “will be saved, as it were, by fire.”

Now on what ground does this person pray that he may not be “rebuked in indignation, nor chastened in hot displeasure”? He speaks as if he would say unto God, “Since the things which I already suffer are many in number, I pray Thee let them suffice;” and he begins to enumerate them, by way of satisfying God; offering what he suffers now, that he may not have to suffer worse evils hereafter. *Exposition of the Psalms, 38(37):3 (A.D. 418)*

COMMENTARY: Augustine likens the experience of purgatory to being “chastened in hot displeasure.” In this exposition, Augustine explains that one may pray that God accepts his earthly sufferings as a way of making “satisfaction” for his sins so that he does not have to suffer worse punishments in the afterlife, that is, in purgatory.

For our part, we recognize that even in this life some punishments are purgatorial—not, indeed, to those whose life is none the better, but rather the worse for them, but to those who are constrained by them to amend their life. All other punishments, whether temporal or eternal, inflicted as they are on every one by divine providence, are sent either on account of past sins, or of sins presently allowed in the life, or to exercise and reveal a man’s graces . . . But temporary punishments are suffered by some in this life only, by others after death, by others both now and then; but all of them before that last and strictest judgment. But of those who suffer temporary punishments after death, all are not doomed to those everlasting pains which are to follow that judgment; for to some, as we have already said, what is not remitted in this world is remitted in the next, that is, they are not punished with the eternal punishment of the world to come.” *City of God, 21:13, (A.D. 426)*

COMMENTARY: Augustine explains that God sends temporal punishments to those in this life to make satisfaction for past sins as well as to reveal and perfect man’s grace (like God did with Abraham). He is clear that some souls also suffer temporal punishments in the afterlife, souls who will not suffer eternal punishment. This means that some of the heaven-bound will suffer post-mortem punishments in purgatory. Augustine also reveals that these temporal punishments occur before the

General Judgment.

For some of the dead, indeed, the prayer of the Church or of pious individuals is heard; but it is for those who, having been regenerated in Christ, did not spend their life so wickedly that they can be judged unworthy of such compassion, nor so well that they can be considered to have no need of it. As also, after the resurrection, there will be some of the dead to whom, after they have endured the pains proper to the spirits of the dead, mercy shall be accorded, and acquittal from the punishment of the eternal fire. For were there not some whose sins, though not remitted in this life, shall be remitted in that which is to come, it could not be truly said, “They shall not be forgiven, neither in this world, neither in that which is to come.” *City of God*, 21:24 (A.D. 426)

COMMENTARY: Augustine again reiterates the justice of purgatory which he describes as “pains proper to the spirits of the dead.” These are the “spirits in prison” (1 Pet 3:19) and the “spirits of the just men made perfect” in purgatory (Heb 12:23) He also equates the fires of purgatory with the fires of hell because some, after suffering in the flames, will gain “acquittal from the punishment of eternal fire.” Augustine bases his interpretation of this acquittal and remission of sin in the afterlife on Matthew 12:32.

Caesar of Arles

Bishop, d.543

If we neither give thanks to God in tribulations nor redeem our own sins by good works, we shall have to remain in that purgatorian fire as long as it takes for those above-mentioned lesser sins to be consumed like wood and straw and hay. *Sermon 179 (104):2 (A.D. 542)*

COMMENTARY: Caesar explains that we can make satisfaction for our sins (literally, “redeem our sins”) by performing good works in this life. If we don’t make sufficient satisfaction for our sins, they will be purged in the fires of purgatory like the wood, hay, and stubble of 1 Corinthians 3.

Gregory the Great

Pope and Doctor of the Church, d.604

Each one will be presented to the Judge exactly as he was when he departed this life. Yet, there must be a cleansing fire before judgment, because of some minor faults that may remain to be purged away. Does not Christ, the Truth, say that if anyone blasphemes against the Holy Spirit he shall not be forgiven “either in this world or in the world to come”? (Mt. 12:32). From this

statement we learn that some sins can be forgiven in this world and some in the world to come. For, if forgiveness is refused for a particular sin, we conclude logically that it is granted for others. This must apply, as I said, to slight transgressions. *Dialogues*, 4:39 (A.D. 594; regn. A.D. 590-604)

COMMENTARY: Pope Gregory affirms that God judges the condition of the soul when it leaves the body (whether it is in a state of grace or a state of sin). There is nothing about Christ's righteousness covering the soul during the judgment. Gregory also affirms that "minor faults" and "slight transgressions" (venial sins) are purged away by a "cleansing fire." Gregory further refers to Christ's statement in Matthew 12:32 that there is forgiveness in the afterlife.

As we have seen, the doctrine of purgatory is not only deeply rooted in Scripture, it is also found explicitly in the writings of the early Church Fathers. The doctrine permeated the beliefs and practices of the early Christians as seen in their liturgies and inscriptions on tombs and catacombs. The Jews before the time of Christ also believed in purgatory based on God's revelations in the Old Testament. It is truly remarkable—and unfortunate—that the "Reformers" had the temerity to set aside this article of Faith, and that Protestants are not aware of these basic historical facts.

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- 160 The Catholic Church defined the dogmas of the Blessed Trinity at the Council of Nicea (A.D. 325), the two natures of Christ at the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451), and the divine and human wills of Christ at the Third Council of Constantinople (A.D. 680-681).
- 161 For a detailed examination of the authority of Scripture and Tradition, see my book *The Biblical Basis for Tradition* (Our Sunday Visitor)
- 162 This is the rule of St. Augustine, adopted by the Church (see, for example, Pope Leo XIII's *Providentissimus Deus*; CCC 116).
- 163 Council of Trent, *Decree Concerning the Canonical Scriptures*, Session 4 (April 8, 1546); First Vatican Council, Session 3, Chapter 2, *On Revelation* (April 24, 1870), No. 5
- 164 CCC, II6-117.
- 165 Cf. Mt 5:20.
- 166 Mt 5:25-26; see also Mt 18:30-34; Lk 12:58-59. Note that Jesus completes His teachings in Matthew chapter 5 by declaring: "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (v.48).
- 167 Cf. Mt 5:21-22; 7:2; 10:15; 11:22,24; 12:36,41-42; Lk 10:14; 11:31-32; Jn 3:19; 5:22,24,27,29,30; 9:39; 12:31; 16:8,11. The only exception is in Jn 7:24, but Jesus in this verse is not talking about judgment in the context of sin and punishment
- 168 Rev 12:10. In this verse, the Greek transliteration for "accuser" is *kategoreo* which is a synonym for *antidikos*.
- 169 Cf. Rev 12:9,12-13,17.
- 170 Cf. Jas 4:12; 5:9; Jn 5:22; 2 Tim 4:1 *Proof from Scripture and the Fathers* 101
- 171 1 Pet 3:19. See also 1 Pet 4:6. Just as Peter refers to the "spirits in prison," Paul refers to the "spirits of just men made perfect" (Heb 12:23), which, as we will see below, is also an allusion to purgatory.
- 172 2:10. The Greek transliteration for "prison" (*phulake*) is the same word used in Mt 5:25; 1 Pet 3:19; Rev 2:10; 20
- 173 Mt 18:34 (DR).
- 174 See, for example, Mt 13:33; 17:9; 18:30 where *heos* terminates the action of the main verb, and Mt 1:25; 11:12; 14:22; 18:34; 26:36; 28:20 where it continues the action
- 175 Mt 12:26-29; 33-37.
- 176 Mt 12:31-32.
- 177 The Greek transliteration of the phrase in both Mt 12:32 and Eph 1:21 is: "*en touto to aioni oute ento mellonti.*"
- 178 See also Rom 8:34; Acts 7:55-56; Col 3:1; Heb 8:1; 10:12; 12:2;
- 179 E.g. Mk 10:30; Lk 1 Pet 3:22. 18:30, Lk 20:35-36, Heb 6:5
- 180 Cf. Eph 1:20-22; Phil 2:9.
- 181 Augustine held that the unforgivable sin was final impenitence. Athanasius, Hilary, Ambrose, Jerome, and Chrysostom held that the unforgivable sin was literally to utter a blasphemy against the Holy Spirit

- 182 Cf. 1 Cor 1:18; 3:14; 5:5; 2 Tim 4:8; Heb 10:25 where “day” refers to one’s Particular Judgment.
- 183 1 Cor 5:11; 6:10; Gal 5:21; Eph 5:18.
- 184 The Greek *dichotomeo* literally means “to cut in half.” See also Mt 8:12; 13:42,50; 22:13; 25:30; Lk 13:28 where “putting away” sinners at the General Judgment refers to eternal damnation.
- 185 Mt 21:35; Mk 12:3,5; 13:9; Lk 20:10-11.
- 186 Cf. Lk 22:63; Jn 18:23; Acts 5:40; 16:37; 22:19; 1 Cor 9:26; 2Cor 11:20.
- 187 The Good Thief would have actually gone to Abraham’s bosom until Christ opened the gates of heaven with His Ascension. Thus, Jesus uses the word “Paradise” in Luke 23:43 in this broader sense.
- 188 The Good Thief did not require baptism because (1) he was unable to be baptized and God doesn’t punish people for failing to do the impossible; (2) he would have sought baptism if he were able and hence had a “baptism of desire”; and (3) he was still on the Old Testament side of the cross and hence the sacraments of the New Law did not yet bind the faithful.
- 189 1 Cor 1:17,19-22,24-27,30; 2:1; 4-7,13.
- 190 1 Cor 1:20-2:9.
- 191 1 Cor 1:10-11. See also 2 Cor 12:20.
- 192 Cf. Rom 1:29; 13:13; 2 Cor 12:20; Gal 5:20; 1 Tim 6:4; Jas 3:14,16.
- 193 Mt 15:10; 11:22,24; 12:36; 25:13; Lk 17:30; Rom 2:5,16; 2 Cor 1:14; Eph 4:30; Phil 1:6,10; 2:16; 1 Thess 5:2,4-5,8; 2 Thess 2:2-3; 2 Pet 3:7,10,12,18; 1 Jn 4:17; Sir 18:24.
- 194 Rom 2:6-8. It is interesting to note that Paul mentions the sin of being “factious” in Rom 2:8, the very sin of which he accuses the Corinthians in 1 Cor 1:10-11; 2 Cor 12:20.
- 195 While Protestants generally ascribe meanings to all of the metaphors in 1Corinthians 3, they do not ascribe a meaning to the “fire” in vv.13,15 because post-mortem fire in relation to the saved does not fit their theology.
- 196 1 Thess 2:4; Jas 1:3. See also Heb 11:17 where Paul says Abraham was “tested” when he “offered up Isaac.”
- 197 2 Tim 4:7; See also 1 Cor 9:24; Heb 12:1
- 198 Cf. Mt 16:26; Mk 8:36; Lk 9:25.
- 199 E.g. Prov 19:19, 21:11, 22:3
- 200 E.g. Ex 21:22, Deut 22:19, Prov 17:26
- 201 Vv.4,10,13
- 202 Even though salvation is the reward, the saved enjoy degrees of glory in heaven based upon the merits they gained on earth. This is why Jesus says, “yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he [John the Baptist]” (Mt 11:11).
- 203 Col 3:24. See also Heb 11:26; 2 Jn 1:8; Ps 28:4; Isa 62:11; Jer 31:16; 32:19. Based on the context, the only logical referent for the “reward” in verse 14 is the “salvation” in verse 15.
- 204 The New Testament uses the word *houtos* around 350 times. As an adverb, it invariably means “in the same manner,” “in the same way,” “in like manner,” “just as,” “the same,” “even so,” “yet so,” and “also.”
- 205 The Greek transliteration for “destroy” (*phtheiro*) is used six other times in the New Testament. On four of these occasions, the word refers to a corruption that results from mortal sin (2 Cor 11:3; Eph 4:22; Jude 10; Rev 19:2). Hence, when Paul uses “destroy” in 1 Cor 3:17, he is referring to the ultimate corruption that results from mortal sin: eternal damnation.
- 206 Paul’s metaphor of bad materials and eternal destruction follows Ezekiel’s prophecy in chapter 13. Ezekiel explains how the Jews built a wall on a “foundation” with “untempered mortar” (vv.14-15; DR). Because the Jews built with faulty materials (like the wood, hay and stubble of 1Corinthians 3), God sent His “wrath to consume” the structure (v.13; DR). It is interesting to note how Paul refers the Corinthians to the warnings in the Old Testament about eternal damnation after he uses a similar metaphor as that used by Ezekiel (1 Cor 10:6-11).
- 207 Paul emphasizes the sins of false wisdom in 1 Cor 1:20-2:9 and divisive allegiances in 1 Cor 1:10-12. Then, after his teaching in 1 Cor 3:14-17, he mentions the same sins of false wisdom in 1 Cor

- 3:18-20 and divisive allegiances in 1 Cor 3:21-23.
- 208 Cf. 1 Cor 12-14.
- 209 1 Cor 14:12,26.
- 210 It is true that Paul changes the metaphor from “building” to “temple” but, as we have mentioned, Paul does this to emphasize the holiness that is at issue. This change in metaphor does not create a new class of Christians. Jesus Christ is the “foundation” of the building (1 Cor 3:11), but Jesus is also the foundation of the “temple” as well (Mt 26:61; Mk 14:58; 15:29; Jn 2:19-21).
- 211 Some Protestant apologists have gone so far as to argue 1 Corinthians 3:14-17 applies only to Christian “ministers,” even though the passage says nothing about “ministers” as Paul is clearly writing to the entire Corinthian church. Because purgatory involves the judgment of all people, the Protestant apologist thinks he moves the passage away from a judgment scenario to a rewards scenario by focusing solely on Christian “ministers” (even though Christian “ministers” are also subject to God’s judgment and the possibility of purgatory).
- 212 We have also seen how the bad deeds of those who go to purgatory may also be a means of their temporal punishments
- 213 Rev 2:10. See also Ps 66:10; Isa 48:10; Jer 9:7; Dan 12:10; Zech 13:9; Mal 3:2-3.
- 214 This is the main reason why Martin Luther removed the Book of Wisdom from the canon of Scripture, even though it had been a part of the Christian Bible for the previous 1500 years.
- 215 Both 1 Cor 15:24 and Eph 1:21 use the identical Greek “*pas arche kai exousia kai dunamis*,” and both 1 Cor 15:25 and Eph 1:22 use the Greek “*hupo ho pous autos*.”
- 216 The Greek word *huper* is used many times throughout the New Testament and generally means “on behalf of,” “for the sake of,” “for the benefit of,” or “for.” This is almost invariably the case in the Gospels. See, for example, Mt 5:44; Mk 14:24; Lk 6:28; 9:50; 16:8; 22:19-20; Jn 6:51; 10:11,15; 11:4,50-52; 13:37-38; 15:13; 17:19; 18:14.
- 217 A third possibility is that Paul is referring to afflictions and sufferings incurred by the Corinthians on behalf of those physically living but spiritually dead.
- 218 Mk 4:1; 3:3; Acts 19:4.
- 219 Mk 10:38-39; Lk 12:50.
- 220 Cf. Lev 4:3, 8, 14, 20-21, 24-25, 29, 32-34; 5:6-9, 11-12; 6:17, 25, 30; 7:7, 37; 8: 2, 14; 9:2-3, 7-8, 10, 15, 22; 10:16-17, 19; 12:6, 8; 14:13, 19, 22, 31; 15:15, 30; 16:3, 5, 6, 9, 11, 25, 27; 23:19.
- 221 There are other similarities in these letters. For example, 2 Maccabees refers to the “expectation” of resurrection in the next life (15:44) and Paul refers to the “hope” and “fact” of resurrection in the next life (15:19-20); 2 Maccabees says without the resurrection prayers for the dead would be “superfluous and foolish” (v.44) and Paul says our faith would be “in vain” and “futile” (vv.14,17); 2 Maccabees also refers to those who have “fallen asleep” (v.45) and so does Paul (v.20).
- 222 As we mentioned in our analysis of Lazarus and the rich man, departed souls were required to expiate their sins in the abode of purgatory before Christ opened the gates of heaven with His Ascension, just as they are required to do so today.
- 223 E.g. Gen 50:10; Num 20:29; Deut 34:8. We also see in Zech 9:11 that God, through the blood of His covenant, “will set your captives free from the waterless pit,” another likely reference to the spiritual abode of purgatory.
- 224 7:33. Like Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), Baruch is another book that was rejected by the Protestant “Reformers.” In that book, Baruch implores God to “hear now the prayer of the dead of Israel” (3:4) which, if referring to those literally (not spiritually) dead, reveals that the souls in purgatory can also pray for us.
- 225 1 Tim 1:13; 2:2.
- 226 1 Tim 3:10,14,16-17; 4:1-2.
- 227 1 Tim 1:15, 2:17,20; 3:6-9, 4:3; 4:14.
- 228 2 Tim 1:16-18. See also 2Tim 4:19 where Paul closes his letter by greeting “the household of Onesiphorus.”

- 229 We have examined 1 Cor 1:18; 3:14; 5:5; 2 Tim 4:8; Heb 10:25.
- 230 4:8. In both 2 Tim 1:18 and 4:8, Paul uses the unique Greek phrase “*en ekeinos ho hemera*” which literally means “in that The Day.”
- 231 Cf. Heb 4:14; 8:1-2; 9:11-12; 10:21-22.
- 232 Cf. Heb 5:6,10; 6:20; 7:15,17.
- 233 1 Pet 3:19. Peter and Paul use the same Greek word *pneuma* to describe the disembodied souls
- 234 Heb 2:10; 5:9; 11:40.
- 235 Heb 7:19,28; 9:9; 10:1,14. Paul teaches that the sacrifices of the Old law could not perfect the conscience of the worshiper while the “sacrifices” of the New law can do so (Heb 9:14,23).
- 236 12:10 See also Heb 12:14. Paul refers to “discipline” eight times in seven verses (vv.5-11), in addition to his use of “punished” (v.5) and “chastises” (v.6).
- 237 Cf. 2 Thess 2:15; 3:6; 1 Cor 11:2.
- 238 Many Protestants claim that the Holy Spirit guides them when interpreting Scripture. But weren’t the early Church Fathers also guided by the Spirit when interpreting Scripture? It is quite arrogant for any of us twenty-first-century Westerners to claim we know better than the Fathers, particularly when they received their understanding of Scripture from the successors to the apostles, and some even from the apostles themselves (Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp, Clement). Protestants may concede that “some” Fathers were guided by the Spirit, but not all of them. The problem with that argument is that all of the Fathers believed in purgatory! Either the early Church became apostate by believing in purgatory, or those who reject purgatory are rejecting an apostolic doctrine of the Faith.
- 239 The Faith of Millions (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1974), p.340.
- 240 The Early Church in the Light of the Monuments (New York: Longmans, Green & Co, 1913), pp.149-157.
- 241 Syriac Liturgy of St. James, “Prayers for the Dead,” *Catholic Encyclopedia*(1908).
- 242 *Acts of Paul and Thecla* (A.D. 160)

HOW TO AVOID PURGATORY

Having demonstrated the reality of purgatory from Scripture and the writings of the early Christians, we now ask the question that logically follows: how do we avoid purgatory? There are three ways: penances, the sacraments, and indulgences. We examine each of these ways in this final chapter.

Penances

We have seen that we're able assist the souls in purgatory, as well as avoid purgatory ourselves, by making satisfaction for sins through penance. Penance (also called "suffrages") is the means by which we convert our hearts to God and turn away from evil, and it's expressed in visible signs, gestures, and good works. Jesus Christ explicitly commands it when He says, "Do penance: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,"²⁴³ and "Bring forth therefore fruit worthy of penance."²⁴⁴ Whereas Protestants often view penance only as a means of sanctifying the already-saved Christian, Jesus tells us that doing penance is necessary for salvation when He says, "unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish."²⁴⁵

"Penance" is synonymous with "satisfaction." Let's briefly review what this means. When someone performs a penance, he makes satisfaction for sin by restoring equality between the offender and the one offended. In human justice, this means taking away from the offender and giving it back to the one who was offended. Although, strictly speaking, the sinner takes nothing away from God, sin deprives God the love and obedience we owe Him as a matter of justice. To restore the sinner to God, something must be taken away from the sinner, thereby giving glory to God. Thus, doing penance for sin is a penal work (which is also why the souls in purgatory "suffer loss" for their bad deeds). Penal works not only make satisfaction for past sins, but also preserve the sinner from future sins, for man does not easily fall back into sin when he has experienced the punishment associated with the sin.

Scripture plainly teaches that a person's penances makes satisfaction for his own sins. For example, David describes his penances by saying, "But as for me, when they were troublesome to me, I was clothed with haircloth. I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer shall be turned into my

bosom.”²⁴⁶ David’s penances of fasting, prayer, and wearing a haircloth turned to his benefit by making satisfaction for his sins and gaining merits for eternal life.

But penance also can make satisfaction for another person’s sins, which is why we’re able assist the souls in purgatory.

For example, when Job’s three friends sin by speaking ill of God, Job does penance by offering prayers and sacrifices on their behalf. In response, God tells them, “I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly” (Job 42:8). Paul likewise instructs us to make satisfaction for others’ sins when he says, “We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak” (Rom 15:1). Paul also says that if a man is overtaken in any trespass (sin), we “who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness” (Gal 6:1). Paul is reiterating the teaching of the Master who restored Peter by requiring him to make a three-fold profession of love for Jesus to make satisfaction for his three-fold denial of Him.²⁴⁷ Then Paul says, “bear one another’s burdens.” (v.2)²⁴⁸ We bear one another’s burdens by freely enduring the temporal punishments that another member of the body owes God for his sins.

How is it possible that our penances can bear the burden of another’s temporal punishments? It is possible because of the Passion of Jesus Christ. We have already discussed how Jesus has atoned for the eternal penalty for sin but has allowed the temporal penalties to remain. But let us emphasize again for our Protestant friends that our penances merit favor with God only because of the propitiatory death of Jesus Christ. We are united to Christ’s Passion by being members of His body through the grace of baptism. Paul says, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body” (1 Cor 12:13). He also says, “We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4).

As members of Christ’s body, we receive His grace and share in His priesthood. Peter says that God chose us “to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”²⁴⁹ John also says that Christ “made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father” (Rev 1:6). By sharing in the priesthood of Jesus Christ, we are able to participate in Christ’s redemptive work.²⁵⁰ As Paul says, right before his teaching about purgatory, “we are God’s fellow workers.”²⁵¹ The Greek for “fellow workers” (*sunergoi*) literally means “synergists,” which means we synergize or co-

operate with Christ in His work of salvation (but only by virtue of God's grace working within us). This work includes making satisfaction for sins so that we can save others and ourselves from the fires of purgatory. As Jude says, we "save some, by snatching them out of the fire" (v.23).

Members of the Body Suffer Together

This mystery of atoning for another's sins is wrapped up in the apostolic doctrine called the Communion of Saints. When, in the Apostles' Creed, we profess our faith in "the communion of saints," we are declaring our belief that there is a true communion between all of God's children, whether they are living on earth (Church Militant), in heaven (Church Triumphant), or in purgatory (Church Suffering). We are all "fellow citizens with the saints, and members of the household of God" (Eph 2:19). Not even death can divide the family of God or separate us from the love of Christ (Rom 8:35-39). Thus, all of the baptized—whether living or dead—are in a mystical, spiritual intercommunion with each other through the Church, of which Christ is the Head and we are members.²⁵²

Paul speaks of this communion in 1 Corinthians 12:14-27. After explaining that we become members of Christ's body through baptism, Paul compares the Mystical Body of Christ with the human body. Using the human body as a metaphor, Paul explains that "there are many parts, yet one body." As members of the one body, there is kind of a symbiotic relationship among the various parts. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." Instead, the members of the body work together, depend upon one another and care for one another. Paul concludes his teaching by saying, "If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together."

With this last verse, Paul is teaching that the actions of one member affect the other members. If one suffers, the whole body suffers. If one rejoices, all rejoice. Further, if one sins, the sin causes a wound that affects the entire body. Because the sin of one member affects the entire body, the members of the affected body can repair the damage. That is, one member can make satisfaction for the sins of another, just as he can make satisfaction for his own sins (that is, the temporal debts). As we have said before, if man can make satisfaction to another man (which he can), then he can also make satisfaction to God, who is more merciful than man. Because the purpose of

purgatory is to complete the satisfaction owed to God, and one member of the body can make satisfaction for another, means that the suffrages of the living can assist the souls in purgatory.

We have seen, in Colossians 1:24, how Paul says that he makes up in his sufferings what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for the sake of His body, the Church. Because Paul's sufferings are offered for the sake of the body (the Church) means that our "spiritual sacrifices" benefit the Church at large. There is a perennial bond of charity among the members of the Church, whether on earth, in heaven, or in purgatory. This is why Paul says that "charity never ends."²⁵³ Paul also says, "None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself" (Rom 14:7). All of our acts of charity redound to the profit of all, and these acts include the penances we perform for the benefit of another.

We call these acts of charity the spiritual goods of the Communion of Saints. These spiritual goods are part of what the Church calls its "treasury." The Church's treasury is the infinite value that Christ's merits have before God the Father, along with the prayers and good works of the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints. Scripture, in fact, refers to the treasury as the "fine linen" that "is the righteous deeds of the saints" (Rev 19:8). In describing the early Christians, Luke says that they "were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common" (Acts 4:32). The spiritual goods of the Church are held in common by all its members, so that the good works and penances of one member can benefit another. Because charity "does not insist on its own way,"²⁵⁴ we are to seek not our own good, but the good of our neighbor (Cf. 1 Cor 10:24). We do this through the offering of penances.

Since Protestants generally acknowledge that we continue to commit sin until the end of our lives, some of them argue that our penances cannot profit the dead, for Scripture says, "We know that God does not listen to sinners" (Jn 9:31).²⁵⁵ Now, it's true that God requires a person to be in a state of grace to make satisfaction for his own sins. Paul says, "if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing" (1 Cor 13:2). However, since we know that we receive grace according to our disposition to receive it, God measures the value of penances according to the disposition of the person for whom it is offered. If the person during his life merited to be assisted by penance after his death, God will apply the penance to the intended recipient, even if performed by one in mortal sin.

Further, Scripture says that God “makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good,” which means that He can accept penances from those both in and out of grace (Mt 5:45). The difference is that penances offered from someone in grace profit both himself and the one for whom the penance is offered, whereas penance from someone in mortal sin can benefit only the one for whom it is offered.²⁵⁶

Because human justice reflects Divine Justice, and one can pay another’s financial debt in this life, it follows that one can pay another’s spiritual debt in this life or in the next one. However, when a person makes satisfaction for another’s sins, he assists in paying the sinner’s debt of punishment, but not in preserving the sinner from future sins. This is because the virtuous actions of one man do not create virtue in another, except inasmuch as one man’s actions may merit an increase of grace for another, which grace assists him in the preservation from future sins. It may also be the case that one who bears another’s punishment does not have to undergo an equivalent punishment to make satisfaction for the sin. This is because the power of satisfaction comes from charity, and it is more charitable for one man to bear another’s burdens than his own.

Also, when one makes satisfaction for the temporal punishments of another, he does not with the same penance remit the debt of his own punishments. This is because the equality of justice demands that there be a greater satisfaction offered to God for the sins of both parties than the sins of only one of them. Nevertheless, doing penance for another is still profitable for the one offering the penance. This is because, when the penitent is in a state of grace, his good works merit eternal life. As we have seen, our works are tested with fire and determine our eternal destiny. They even follow us into heaven. At the resurrection, Jesus said that “he will repay every man for what he has done”²⁵⁷ and that he “will give to each of you as your works deserve.”²⁵⁸

The Three Forms of Penance

The three most common forms of penance by which we “bear one another’s burdens” are prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Scripture says, “Prayer is good when accompanied by fasting, almsgiving, and righteousness.”²⁵⁹ These three penal works correspond to the three kinds of goods that we have: bodily, spiritual, and material. Fasting deprives us of

bodily goods and almsgiving deprives us of material goods. There is no need to deprive ourselves of spiritual goods because it is the state of the spirit (soul) at death that determines our eternal destiny. Yet, we perfect the spiritual life by completely submitting the bodily and material goods to our spiritual needs as a penal work. This means that we exercise the three penal works in connection with the three kinds of goods. Through the Mystical Body, these works make up for the punishment that both we and the souls in purgatory owe to God.

The Apostle John identifies the three causes of sin as “the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life” (1 Jn 2:16). In light of John’s teaching, Augustine says that fasting is directed against the lust of the flesh, almsgiving against the lust of the eyes, and prayer against the pride of life. We further note that every sin injures our relationship with Christ and inflicts a wound on His body that affects both us and the other members of the body. In light of this same teaching, Aquinas says that prayer prevents us from sinning against God, almsgiving remedies sins against our neighbor, and fasting curbs sins against ourselves. Let’s take a more detailed look at prayer, fasting, and almsgiving in the context of purgatory

1. Prayer

We have already seen many examples in Scripture where prayers are offered to benefit the dead.²⁶⁰ We have also seen how the Church Fathers believed in offering prayers for the Holy Souls. There are other examples in Scripture that reveal the connection between the prayers of the living and their effects on the dead. For example, when Saul was king he sought communion with the dead (cf. 1 Sam 28:8-20). In response, the deceased prophet Samuel appeared to Saul and warned him of God’s coming judgment.

We note that Samuel was in Abraham’s bosom—the abode of the dead that was neither heaven nor hell. Nevertheless, Saul’s prayer reached and had an effect on Samuel, by “bringing him up” from his temporary, post-mortem dwelling place. This is a precedent for how prayers of the living can “bring up” souls from purgatory to heaven.²⁶¹

At His Transfiguration, Jesus communicated with Moses and Elijah, who were living in the realm of the dead.²⁶² When Jesus cried out on the Cross, many people thought He was summoning deceased Elijah for assistance.²⁶³

When Jesus died, many souls were raised out of their graves and went into the city appearing to many people.²⁶⁴ In the Book of Revelation, we see the prayers of those on earth ascend into eternity as “incense” before God.²⁶⁵ These scriptures demonstrate that prayers from the living on earth influence those who are living in the afterlife, but who are not yet in heaven.

Protestants often argue that prayer cannot make satisfaction for sin because it is not penal, but pleasurable. This is only partly true. Some forms of prayer are joyful (prayers of adoration, thanksgiving), but other forms are works of satisfaction (prayers of repentance and forgiveness). When in the Our Father we pray to God to “forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors,” we are asking Him to forgive our sins and to free us from the debt of punishment. We see this with David’s prayer of repentance: “Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy steadfast love . . . wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleans me from my sin!” (Ps 51:1-2). When in prayer we pour out our sorrow for sin, the prayer becomes a penal work that makes satisfaction for sin.

Although the Holy Souls are members of the Mystical Body who are assisted by our prayers, we don’t know for certain whether they’re able to pray for us. Aquinas explained that we do not generally pray to the souls in purgatory for two reasons. First, although they are closer to God than we are, their suffering is greater than ours. This great suffering means that they are in no condition to pray for us but in a condition that demands our prayers for them. Secondly, because the Holy Souls do not yet enjoy the Beatific Vision, they’re unable to know whether we’re asking for their prayers. It appears that Thomas based his position on the premise that the souls cannot merit, and, hence, cannot hear our prayers. As always, Aquinas presents a reasonable case for his position.

Nevertheless, because the souls in purgatory are united to us by supernatural charity, there is no reason to contend that they are unable to pray for us. And of course, God could reveal to the Holy Souls our needs and requests. Nothing in Scripture or Tradition precludes such a possibility. Moreover, when the Book of Revelation refers to the “prayers of the saints,”²⁶⁶ it does not say that these prayers come exclusively from those on earth. They could be coming from those in purgatory.

The word for “saint” (Hebrew, *qaddiysh*; Greek, *hagios*) simply means “holy one,” and the Scriptures refer to living and deceased humans as saints.²⁶⁷ If Scripture teaches that the saints in heaven respond to the prayers of those on earth (which it clearly does),²⁶⁸ then it may be possible for the

souls in purgatory to also respond to our prayers. This is why prominent theologians like Suarez and Bellarmine said that it was not only possible, but permissible, to appeal to the Holy Souls for their intercession.

2. Fasting

Fasting is the penitential act of abstaining from food or drink, either partially (for example, not eating meat or eating one meal a day) or completely (for example, consuming nothing, or water only). It is a penal work because it takes away from the sinner something that he desires. Because fasting tames the body's desire for food, it also subdues the lusts of the flesh. This is because the sensitive appetite is satisfied by carnal pleasure, namely food and sex. Hence, Paul says we must show ourselves as servants of God "in fastings and chastity."²⁶⁹ Fasting promotes chastity just as gluttony promotes lust. If we cannot tame our natural passions, we will never prevail in the spiritual battle.

Fasting also raises the mind to the spiritual realm and makes us more docile to the will of God. This is why, after Daniel fasted for three weeks, he received a vision from God.²⁷⁰ We also see how the apostles' fasts moved the Holy Spirit to guide them in ordaining new priests.²⁷¹ The preacher says, "I thought in my heart, to withdraw my flesh from wine, that I might turn my mind to wisdom, and might avoid folly."²⁷² Fasting bridles concupiscence by subjecting the flesh to the spirit, and this subjection leads the mind and heart to the things of heaven. Jesus also teaches us that fasting has tremendous power over the devil, such as in the case of the demon that could only be expelled from the possessed boy through "prayer and fasting" (Mk 9:29).

Finally, fasting makes satisfaction for sins because God responds by relenting of His punishments. Scripture provides us with many examples of how God accepts our fasts for this purpose. Scripture says God "repents of evil" when we come to him "with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning" (Joel 2:12-13). We see this in the book of Jonah, when both the people and the livestock of Nineveh abstained from all food and water, and then God "repented of the evil which he had said he would do to them" (3:7-10). We also see this in the book of Judith, when "the people fasted many days throughout Judea" and "the Lord heard their prayers and looked upon their affliction" (4:13). Scripture provides many other like examples.²⁷³

While acknowledging these Old Testament practices, some Protestants

deny that fasting is required in the New Testament. They point to Jesus' statement, "Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them?"²⁷⁴ Of course, Jesus follows this statement by adding, "Then days will come, when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast."²⁷⁵ Since Jesus has been "taken away" into heaven, we are living in the days when we "will fast." In fact, in Matthew 6:16-18 Jesus instructs us how to fast:

And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Finally, Catholics fast because Christ fasted, and we are called to be like Christ.²⁷⁶

Since apostolic times, the Church has required Catholics to abstain from flesh meat on Fridays, the day of Christ's Passion, to make satisfaction for their sins. In fact, throughout most of the Church's history, Catholics were required to abstain not only from meat (including meat gravy and soup), but also eggs and milk foods.²⁷⁷ The Church imposed these requirements because meat and dairy products, being rich in substance, provide the most pleasure to the palate and also an incentive to lust (the main vice that fasting aims to conquer). Because the animals that walk the earth and breathe the air are more like man in body, they afford greater enjoyment and nourishment than other types of foods.

In the Church's traditional calendar, the days of complete abstinence are all Fridays, Ash Wednesday, Holy Saturday, and the Vigils of the Immaculate Conception and Christmas.²⁷⁸ The days of partial abstinence are Ember Wednesdays and Saturdays (days at the beginning of certain seasons like Advent and Lent) and the Vigil of Pentecost. On days of complete abstinence, flesh meat, soup and gravy made from meat are not permitted at all. On days of partial abstinence, flesh meat, soup and gravy are permitted once a day at the principal meal.

All persons over seven years of age are bound to the law of abstinence. All persons over twenty-one and under sixty are bound to the law of fast. This means that on fast days they may have only one principal meal and two smaller, meatless meals (also called "collations") sufficient to maintain strength according to each one's needs. The two smaller meals together

should not equal one full meal. Eating between meals on fast days is not permitted, but liquids like milk and fruit juices may be taken any time. The Church has always granted dispensations from these requirements for serious reasons concerning health or the ability to work.

3. Almsgiving

Almsgiving, which literally means “mercy,”²⁷⁹ is any material favor performed to assist the needy. Almsgiving must always be prompted by the virtue of charity, and not for selfish motives, for Paul makes the astonishing statement: “And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.”²⁸⁰ Yet, while almsgiving is a work of mercy, it is also an act of justice that makes satisfaction for sin. This is because giving alms takes away from one who has and gives to one who has not. Because this act restores the equity of justice, it avails for the satisfaction of temporal punishments.

For example, Scripture says, “Blessed is he who considers the poor! The Lord delivers him in the day of trouble,” wherein “the day” refers to one’s purgatorial judgment by fire (Ps 41:1). Sirach connects alms with purgatory when he says “Water quencheth a flaming fire, and alms resisteth sins.”²⁸¹ Scripture further says, “For alms deliver from all sin, and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness.”²⁸² Daniel says to king Nebuchadnezzar, “redeem thou thy sins with alms, and thy iniquities with works of mercy to the poor.”²⁸³ The Book of Proverbs succinctly summarizes the teaching: “charity covereth all sins.”²⁸⁴

In the New Testament, Paul says, “Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God,” where “sacrifices” are acts that satisfy divine justice (Heb 13:16). Jesus also says, “But yet that which remaineth, give alms; and behold, all things are clean unto you.”²⁸⁵ This is why the early Christians held everything in common and “sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need” (Acts 2:45). If we do not give our “pennies” away in this life, Jesus warns us that we will pay them in purgatory, even unto the very last one (Mt 5:26). In short, Scripture clearly connects the giving of alms with making satisfaction for sins.

Not only does almsgiving atone for sin, but it is necessary for our salvation. If we fail to build with the “precious stones” of almsgiving and

build only with “wood, hay, and stubble,” God will destroy us at the Judgment (1 Cor 3:17). Jesus is clear that our almsgiving—how we assist the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the stranger—determines our eternal destiny (Mt 25:31-46). For whatever we do to the least of our brothers, we do to Jesus Himself. That’s why Jesus says, “Give to him who begs from you, and do not refuse him who would borrow from you” (Mt 5:42). James teaches that if a man neglects to give alms to the poor, his faith cannot save him (cf. 2:14-15). Such faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead (v.17). John also asks, “But if any one has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him?” (1 Jn 3:17). Such a man, John says, does not have “eternal life abiding in him” (v.15).

Almsgiving includes giving not only to the poor but also to the Church. In the Old Testament, the faithful were required to give ten percent of their earnings to the house of God and to God’s priests.²⁸⁶ This portion was called a tithe, from the word *teotha*, meaning “a tenth.” For example, Abraham gave the priest Melchizedek “a tenth of everything” after Melchizedek offered the bread-and-wine sacrifice to God.²⁸⁷ Scripture instructs us to “dedicate your tithe with gladness. Give to the Most High as he has given, and as generously as your hand has found” (Sir 35:10).

The obligation to tithe to the priests of God continues in the New Covenant. Jesus teaches that “the laborer deserves his food.”²⁸⁸ Jesus was clear that “those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel” (1 Cor 9:14). Thus, Paul repeats Jesus’ teaching by saying, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain,” and, “The laborer deserves his wages.”²⁸⁹ Paul also says, “If we have sown spiritual good among you, is it too much if we reap your material benefits?” (1 Cor 9:11). All the members of the Church have an obligation to support the ministers of the Church to further the proclamation of the gospel.

In fact, in the New Covenant, we have a *greater* obligation to tithe than our forefathers had in the Old Covenant. Jesus teaches us that “unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:20). The Pharisees would give out of their abundance, but we, like the poor widow, are required to give in abundance.²⁹⁰ Jesus wants us to give until it hurts, because penal works are necessary to make satisfaction for sin. Avoiding purgatory means reaching perfection in this life, and we can do so through generous almsgiving. As Jesus said to the rich young man, “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you

possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me” (Mt 19:21).

Although material almsgiving is an essential duty before God, spiritual almsgiving has even greater value; as Scripture says, “I will give you a good gift, forsake not my law.”²⁹¹ Just as the soul is more excellent than the body, spiritual gifts are more excellent than corporeal gifts. Corporeal gifts benefit a person’s temporal sustenance, whereas spiritual almsgiving benefits one’s eternal sustenance. The work of apologetics and evangelization is one type of spiritual almsgiving. When our witness helps bring someone to the Catholic and apostolic faith, we make satisfaction for our sins. James says, “My brethren, if any one among you wanders from the truth and some one brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins” (5:19-20).

The Sacraments

We now turn to a brief discussion on the sacraments. A sacrament is an outward sign instituted by Jesus Christ to give grace to the soul. Just as Jesus redeemed us through the sacrifice of His physical body, He applies the fruits of His redemptive work through His Mystical Body, the Catholic Church. This is why Paul says, “Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her” (Eph 5:25-26). Christ “sanctifies” the Church—that is, the members of His body—through the sacraments. The sacraments derive their efficacy solely from the Passion of Jesus Christ. Jesus instituted seven sacraments of the New Law to be administered by His Church: Baptism, Penance (Confession), the Eucharist, Confirmation, Holy Matrimony, Holy Orders and Anointing of the Sick (Extreme Unction).²⁹²

We have already mentioned the salutary effects of the sacraments of baptism and confession.²⁹³ In baptism, Christ cleanses the soul of all sin (both Original and actual) and remits all punishment (eternal and temporal) due to sin. As Ezekiel prophesied, “I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses” (36:25). Paul explains that Christ sanctifies the Church by “having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:26-27).

Because the “washing of water” (baptism) removes all sin and punishment from the soul, the soul is presented to Christ without stain or blemish. This is why Paul says, “you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,” where “sanctified” is in the Greek aorist past tense (*hagiazō*). Paul also says that because we have died with Christ in baptism, we also shall live with Christ.²⁹⁴ This means that every baptized person is incorporated into the Passion of Jesus Christ as if he had suffered and died to make sufficient satisfaction for his sins (just like Christ made sufficient satisfaction for our sins). Because baptism is a rebirth in Christ that remits all sin and punishment, a soul can receive it only once. Let us now look in more detail at the sacrament of confession.

Confession: “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven”

At the beginning of the second chapter, we saw various Scripture verses alluding to the Sacrament of Penance, also called confession or reconciliation. The Apostle John reveals that we must “confess our sins” in order for Christ to “forgive our sins and cleanse us” from evil (1 Jn 1:9). When we confess our sins in the sacrament, Christ’s atonement washes away our sins and then “there is no longer any offering for sin” (Heb 10:18). If, however, we fall back into sin, we must confess these new sins in the sacrament. If we do not confess our sins, “there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,” that is, Christ’s atoning sacrifice will not be applied to us (Heb 10:26).

We also saw how Jesus gave His apostles the authority to forgive sins when He told them: “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (Jn 20:23). Christ entrusted His Church with the authority to forgive sins when He promised to give Peter the keys: “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Mt 16:19). Notice the parallels in these two verses. What is “forgiven” in John is considered “loosed” in Matthew, and what is “retained” in John is considered “bound” in Matthew. This means that the power to forgive/loose sin and retain/bind sin flows from the authority of the keys.

So what are the keys? The keys metaphorically represent Christ’s authority over life and death.²⁹⁵ Jesus says, “I died, and behold I am alive for

evermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades” (Rev 1:18). Because sin leads to death and forgiveness of sin leads to life, the keys symbolize the authority to forgive and retain sin. Because the stain of sin and the debt of punishment prevent one from entering the kingdom of heaven, the “keys to the kingdom of heaven” open the door by forgiving sin and remitting punishment, and shut the door to the kingdom by retaining sin and imposing punishment.

The Book of Revelation reveals, “The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one shall shut, who shuts and no one opens” (3:7). Just as the prime minister to the king of the old Davidic kingdom had the “key” to “open and shut,”²⁹⁶ the prime minister (the pope) to the King (Jesus) of the new Davidic kingdom (the Catholic Church) has the key to bind and loose. Only now, the keys of the kingdom, which Jesus gives to Peter, open the door not to a temporal kingdom, but to the eternal kingdom of heaven itself. This is why Jesus says that what is bound or loosed on earth is ratified in heaven. This is also why the sacrament of confession is necessary for salvation for all who commit actual sin

While Christ delegated His keys to Peter alone (and to his successors through the passing of the keys), the other apostles who were united to Christ through Peter also shared in his binding and loosing authority (Cf. Mt 18:18). The apostles handed on their authority to successors, and they to their successors, and so on all the way down to the present age. Thus, all the bishops of the Catholic Church, who trace their priestly ordinations back to the original apostles, share in the power of the keys. This means that Catholic bishops and the priests they ordain have the authority to forgive sins. This is why Paul describes the priests of the Church “as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor 4:1).

Through the Sacrament of Penance, the priest, through the power of the keys, forgives the sinner both his mortal and venial sins. As in baptism, the grace that God infuses into the soul in the sacrament of confession remits the guilt and the eternal debt of punishment (hell) due to sin. However, unlike baptism, which remits all debt (eternal and temporal) of punishment, confession does not remit the entire debt of temporal punishment (although it lessens the debt, through the Church’s authority to “loose”).²⁹⁷ This is because, in baptism, man receives a new life in Christ, and nothing of his former life (including all sin and punishment) remains. In confession, the man is not born again, but healed.

Thus, just as the sinner was responsible for committing the sins that he confessed in the sacrament, God requires the sinner to take responsibility in making satisfaction for those sins—either in this life, or in the next. Although the Sacrament of Penance remits only the punishment of the one confessing the sins (and not the punishment of those in purgatory), we will see at the end of this chapter how the power of the keys can remit the punishments of the Holy Souls as well (through “indulgences”).

What happens to a man who falls back into sin after confession? Some contend that his forgiven sins and related punishments return after he commits the same sins, because Ezekiel says, “But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity . . . [n]one of the righteous deeds which he has done shall be remembered” (Ezek 18:24). Yet in this verse, God does not mean that prior sins or punishments return, but only that a man’s former good deeds are no benefit to him when he is in mortal sin. For Scripture says that God’s “work is perfect” (Deut 32:4) and thus His work of forgiveness is perfect. God does not repent of his work of forgiveness (Cf. Rom 11:29). This means that a man’s subsequent sin cannot undo the prior forgiveness that God gave him. This also means that God forgives *all* the sins of a repentant sinner, not just some of his sins, just as God demands satisfaction for all sins, down to the “last penny.”

Many Catholics wonder whether, after their sins are forgiven in confession, they return to the state of grace and virtue they had before committing mortal sin. It is clear that a man receives the gratuitous virtues in confession because he is infused in this sacrament with the grace from which these virtues flow. However, because he owes satisfaction for his sins, he is not in the same position as he was before.

Nevertheless, a man may be restored to a lesser, equal, or even greater grace than he had before, depending upon how his free will is disposed to receive God’s grace. If for example he has a firmer purpose of amendment and greater desire for grace, he may arise to a greater level of grace, even though his debt of punishment has increased. In the story of the prodigal son, this restoration is symbolized by the father clothing his repentant son with “the best robe” (Lk 15:22). This is why God says to the repentant sinner, “I will restore to you the years which the swarming locust has eaten . . . You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied” (Joel 2:25-26).

Before closing this section, let us recall that Jesus gave the apostles the power not only to loose but to bind. “Loosing,” of course, refers to forgiving

sins. But what does “binding” refer to? Binding refers to imposing punishments for sin. Just as God both spares and inflicts punishments for sin, His priests also are able both to remit and impose punishments for sin. A priest can bind a sinner to punishment in two ways. First, by withholding forgiveness from a sinner (that is, not “loosing” the sin) who demonstrates a lack of contrition for his sins.²⁹⁸ Secondly, by imposing a penance upon a sinner as condition for making satisfaction for his forgiven sins.

The Mass: “Do this in remembrance of me”

We have seen how the Church Fathers frequently refer to the Sacrifice of the Mass as assisting the souls in purgatory. We see these references as early as A.D. 211 in the writings of Tertullian, as well as among great Fathers like Cyril of Jerusalem, Ambrose and Augustine. Many saints²⁹⁹ have received very vivid revelations of souls leaving the flames of purgatory by virtue of the Mass. Imploring forgiveness for the sins of the dead at the Mass has been the practice of the Catholic Church since the very beginning. Every November 2 the Church specifically offers its Masses throughout the world for the souls in purgatory (in fact, the Church devotes the entire month of November to assisting the Holy Souls). The Mass assists the Holy Souls because it is a sacrifice and, therefore, has satisfactory power.³⁰⁰ This means we can and should offer the Mass with the intention of remitting punishment for sin, both for the living and the dead.

As we have demonstrated throughout this book, we, as members of the Body of Christ, can make satisfaction for another’s sins. This means that we can intentionally offer the sacrifice of the Mass for the benefit of another, either living or dead, and God is sure to apply its benefits to that person, according to his disposition. This can be done formally (by making arrangements with the priest to offer the Mass for that intention) or informally (by intention only). Whereas only those with the keys (the ministerial priests of the Church) have the power to offer the Mass, all of the baptized (the royal priests) are able to benefit from the Holy Sacrifice. Although an explanation of the scriptural basis for the Mass is beyond the scope of this section, let us look at some biblical background to the Church’s theology of the Mass and how it assists the souls in purgatory.³⁰¹

We must first mention that Catholics do not view the Mass as a new sacrifice, or think that it adds anything to the sacrifice of Christ. This would

be impossible, for Christ's single sacrifice "is the expiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 Jn 2:2). Rather, the Mass re-presents the same sacrifice that Christ offered on Calvary in a sacramental and unbloody manner, because Christ's infinite sacrifice transcends time and space. In describing the Mass, Paul says, "For Christ our pasch is sacrificed. Therefore let us feast."³⁰²

When the priest repeats the words of consecration that Jesus used at the Last Supper, God makes Christ's single and eternal sacrifice present upon Catholic altars. In this way, God applies the merits of Christ's infinite sacrifice to sinners of all times and places. This is why, after Jesus revealed to the apostles, "this is my body" and "this is my blood," He commanded them: "Do this in remembrance of me."³⁰³ The Greek word for "remembrance" is *anamnesis* which refers to a "memorial sacrifice."³⁰⁴ This means that Jesus' literally commanded His apostles, "Offer this as my memorial sacrifice."

In establishing the Eucharistic sacrifice, Jesus fulfilled the prophecies of the prophet Malachi. Malachi revealed that God would someday reject the sacrifices of the Old Law and institute a new offering: "For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering; for my name is great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts."³⁰⁵ With this prophecy, Malachi reveals that God would establish single sacrifice that would be offered around the clock, in every place—including among the Gentiles. Malachi later confirms that this is the sacrifice of the new "covenant," when the "Lord will suddenly come to his temple" (3:1).

Interestingly, Malachi makes a connection between the New Covenant sacrifice and God's purification of the sons of the Church: "For he is like a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, till they present right offerings to the Lord" (3:2-3). This is the Eucharistic sacrifice that Paul says shall "purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (Heb 9:14). The early Church Fathers were unanimous in their interpretation that Malachi's prophecy referred to the Sacrifice of the Mass, which purifies both the living and the dead. No Christian disputed this revealed truth until the Protestant rebellion in the sixteenth century.

In the same Epistle to the Hebrews, Paul alludes to Malachi's prophecy when he describes the heavenly priesthood of Christ. After Paul explains that

God in both the Old and New Covenants required the shedding of blood to forgive sins,³⁰⁶ Paul describes the respective rites by saying, “Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites [Old Covenant], but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices [New Covenant] than these” (Heb 9:23). As we can plainly see, even though Christ offered His Calvary sacrifice once-for-all, Paul refers to the New Covenant sacrifice as “sacrifices,” in the plural. Paul’s use of the plural makes sense only if he is describing Christ’s sacrifice in the context of its sacramental re-presentation “in every place” around the world in the Holy Mass.

Further, Paul reveals that the “heavenly things” are “purified” by these “better sacrifices.” The “heavenly things” refer to the people of the New Covenant, just as the “copies of the heavenly things” referred to the “people” of the Old Covenant (cf. v.19). Once again, this means that those in the New Covenant are purified from their sin and punishment through the sacrifice of the Mass. This purification from sin, which is the object of liturgical sacrifice, applies not only to those on earth, but also to those in purgatory. As royal priests in the one priesthood of Jesus Christ, we can make satisfaction for sin and punishment throughout the Mystical Body by uniting our “spiritual sacrifices” to our Lord’s sacrifice (see 1 Pet 2:5). This is yet another way we can make up with our own sacrifices what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ, for the sake of the Church (cf. Col 1:24).

How is the New Covenant sacrifice offered? It is offered in the same manner as Melchizedek’s sacrifice. As we saw earlier, Melchizedek is the first priest mentioned in the Old Testament who offered a sacrifice of bread and wine (Gen 14:18). Paul reveals that Jesus’ priesthood in heaven is modeled after that of Melchizedek.³⁰⁷ Note, however, that when Paul makes the bread and wine connection between Jesus and Melchizedek, he never mentions the Last Supper. Instead, Paul is referring to Christ’s heavenly priesthood, which He exercises through His New Covenant priests on earth (those men who are offering “better sacrifices” than those of the Old Covenant). Thus, Christ is a priest in the same manner as Melchizedek because He makes His priestly sacrifice present through His ministerial priests under the appearance of bread and wine in the Holy Mass.

Following the sacrifice of the Mass, wherein the priest changes bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, Catholics receive the Sacrament of the Eucharist, also called Holy Communion. Jesus says, “Truly, truly, I say to

you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him” (Jn 6:53-56). By consuming Christ’s flesh and blood, Catholics receive an infusion of grace that washes away venial sin, remits the debt of temporal punishment, and increases their merits for greater glory in heaven.³⁰⁸ Catholics can offer the satisfactory benefits from Communion for their souls as well as for the souls in purgatory.

What about those in mortal sin? Are they forgiven of their sin through the sacrament of the Eucharist? No, they are not. Although it’s true that an infusion of grace can wash away mortal sin, this forgiveness must come from the Sacrament of Penance. Because a person turns away from God by committing mortal sin through an act of pride, God requires the sinner to return to Him through an act of humility: confessing his sins to a priest. This humbling and penitential act is a movement contrary to the sinner’s proud and stubborn will and begins in earnest the process of making satisfaction for his sins.

In fact, if a person receives the Eucharist while in a state of mortal sin, he commits another mortal sin by doing so and compounds the gravity of his spiritual condition. Paul says, “Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself.”³⁰⁹ The Greek word for “judgment” (*krima*) that Paul uses refers to nothing less than eternal damnation.³¹⁰ Why would Paul impose the harshest of all penalties for receiving the Eucharist in a state of mortal sin? Because receiving the Eucharist is an actual “participation in the body and blood of Christ.”³¹¹ When we receive the Eucharist, we “become partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet 1:4). We commune with Jesus Christ Himself. Because Christ is “the light of the world”³¹² and a person in mortal sin is in darkness (because he has no grace), the light and darkness cannot be mixed without committing sacrilege. Holiness cannot be a partaker with sin. As Paul says, “Or what fellowship has light with darkness? Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean” (2 Cor 6:14,17).

Extreme Unction: “Is any man sick among you?”

Jesus Christ instituted the Sacrament of Extreme Unction (also called “Anointing of the Sick”) to commend those who are seriously ill to the mercy of God, so that He might heal them both spiritually and physically. This is another sacrament that forgives sin and remits punishment to help souls avoid purgatory. A priest confers this sacrament upon those who are in danger of death by anointing the parts of their body with blessed oil. The parts of the body that are anointed are those parts that were used to commit sin—the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, hands and feet. Mark in his gospel refers to the apostles conferring this sacrament when he records, “And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them.”³¹³

The Scriptural basis for this sacrament is found quite explicitly in the Epistle of James: “Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders [priests] of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven” (Jas 5:14-15). This is another passage in Scripture that proves the priests of Christ’s Church have the authority to forgive sins. Although Protestant groups sometimes conduct “healing prayers” by calling upon the prayers of their pastors, nowhere in their theology or practice do they accommodate priestly forgiveness of sin, which is set forth so clearly in this passage by the Apostle James. Let’s look briefly at some of the elements of this sacrament.

The sacrament is administered only to those who are in danger of death. Mark refers to those “that were sick” and James also asks, “Is any among you sick?” (which is why this sacrament is often called “the sacrament of the sick”).³¹⁴ The sacrament is not administered to those in good health, however it is also not deferred until someone is at the very point of death. This is because one of the purposes of the sacrament is bodily healing (although this is of secondary importance).³¹⁵ Also, if a person’s reasoning and consciousness are impaired through illness, his mind will be unable to direct his will to participate in the graces conferred, and this inability may diminish the sacrament’s efficacy. We also note that the sacrament is often conferred upon those who are not sick but have a sure prospect of death, such as those who are going to war or who have been condemned to death by the state.

The principal benefit of this sacrament is the forgiveness of sin. As James says, “the prayer of faith will save the sick man” and “if he has committed

sins, he will be forgiven.” Because Christ instituted the sacraments of baptism and confession to wash away grave sin, Extreme Unction is primarily ordered to the forgiveness of lesser sin. Mortal sin can impede the grace of the sacrament, which is why priests desire to administer the sacrament of confession before anointing, if the person is capable of confessing his sins. Hence, Baptism and Confession are directed toward the obstacles that deprive a man of spiritual life (Original Sin and actual mortal sin), whereas Extreme Unction is directed toward the defects that weaken a man’s spiritual life (venial sin and remnants of sin).

The Catechism of the Council of Trent states that the sacrament “liberates the soul from the languor and infirmity which it contracted from sins, and from all the other remains of sin.”³¹⁶ Thus, the grace of the sacrament of anointing remits all venial sin (the “wood, hay, and stubble”) as well as remnants of sin, that is, those lingering defects that otherwise prevent the soul’s total and complete union with God— the defects that detain souls in purgatory. On these points, Aquinas says that the grace of the sacrament moves the free will to be sorrowful for sin, and this contrition removes the stain of sin as the sinner is so disposed. He also says that God does not lessen the measure of satisfaction required for sin, but that the debt of punishment is diminished because the person is able, through the grace of the sacrament, to bear his punishment more easily.

Nevertheless, through the power of the keys and the treasury of the Church, the priest is able to remit all the sick person’s temporal punishment so long as there is no obstacle preventing this great grace. The priest remits the temporal punishment of the sick person’s sins through what is called the “Apostolic Blessing” conferred upon the sick person at the conclusion of the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. The priest says, “By the Faculty which the Apostolic See has given me, I grant you a plenary indulgence for the remission of all your sins, and I bless you. In the Name of the Father and the Son + and the Holy Spirit. Amen.”³¹⁷ We shall see in the next section what is meant by a “plenary indulgence.

The sacrament also strengthens the sick person against the attacks of the devil. At no time does the devil work harder at trying to deprive us of hope in God than when we are facing the end of our lives. As the Book of Wisdom says, “They will come with dread when their sins are reckoned up, and their lawless deeds will convict them to their face” (4:20). Man dreads nothing more than to face his own death, at which time he recalls all of his past sins

and anticipates God's pending judgment upon him. The sacrament of anointing infuses the soul with graces to help the soul fight bravely against the adversary and surrender itself to the mercy of God.

To assist in this battle, the priest will also give the sick person the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. When it is given to the dying the Eucharist is called Viaticum, which is Latin for "food for the journey." All these graces, which flow from the Passion of Christ, prepare the soul for immediate entrance into heaven, thereby avoiding the need for purgatory. As Scripture says, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord" (14:13).

Indulgences

"Whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven"

In addition to prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and the sacraments, obtaining indulgences is one of the most powerful means of assisting the souls in purgatory and expiating our own punishments while on earth.³¹⁸ Many of the Church Fathers wrote about indulgences, including Tertullian, Cyprian, Gregory of Nyssa, Basil, Cummian, and Bede. The Church defines an indulgence as a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven. The faithful Catholic who is duly disposed gains an indulgence under certain defined conditions through the Church's help when, as a minister of redemption, it dispenses and applies with authority the treasury of satisfactions won by Christ and the saints.³¹⁹

As with the Church's authority to forgive sin, a person obtains an indulgence through the Church by virtue of the power of the keys.³²⁰ This means that the authority of granting indulgences rests with the pope who alone holds the keys.³²¹ We recall that Christ promised to Peter that whatever he bound or loosed on earth would be bound or loosed in heaven (cf. Mt 16:19). By using the term "whatever" (Greek, *ho ean*), Christ empowered Peter with a broad and plenary power to remit not only sin but the punishments for sin as well. If Jesus granted His priests the authority to remove the eternal penalty of sin (through the sacrament of confession), it logically follows that priests have the authority to remit the temporal

punishments due to sin as well.

The Church is able (through the power of the keys) to remit temporal punishment due to sin because of its treasury of merits. This treasury, as we have mentioned, includes not only the superabundant merits of Jesus Christ but also the abundant merits of the saints. By God's grace, many members of the Mystical Body have performed works of satisfaction that exceed the requirement of their debts. These works include not only voluntary penances but also the patient endurance of the scourges of this world, with the intention of making reparation for sin. In fact, the quantity of these merits is so great that it exceeds the entire debt of punishment due from the rest of the members of the Body of Christ.³²² These merits, along with the infinite merits of Christ, are the common property of the whole Church and are distributed to the members of the body according to the judgment of the Vicar of Christ who holds the keys to the kingdom of heaven.

While indulgences can be applied to both the living and the dead,³²³ there is an important distinction in their application: those who are living on earth are subject to the Church's immediate jurisdiction whereas those who have died are subject directly to God's jurisdiction. Thus, the Church grants indulgences to the living as an exercise of its judicial authority, but applies indulgences to the dead by way of petition. That is, the Church implores God to apply the indulgence to the intended soul in purgatory by accepting the works of satisfaction that have been performed to that end. This means we cannot be certain that God will apply the indulgence to a particular soul, but we piously believe that the intended soul will benefit from the indulgence in some way.³²⁴ That having been said, we know with certainty that God will apply the indulgence to a soul or souls according to His infinite standards of justice.

Unfortunately, there are many misconceptions about indulgences, even among Catholics. For example, some people think that a person can "buy his way out of hell" with an indulgence. This can't be true, first of all, because indulgences remit temporal punishment only—not the eternal punishment of hell. Furthermore, one must be in a state of grace to receive an indulgence. That is, the recipient of an indulgence must be united to the One who merited the indulgence.

Neither does an indulgence guarantee a person's salvation or allow him to "indulge" in sin. One who receives an indulgence can still fall into mortal sin and lose his soul. An indulgence does not pardon future sin, but only it remits

the punishment due to past sin already forgiven.

Before the Second Vatican Council, the Church would declare that a particular indulgence would equate to a certain number of days of penance. By reciting a certain prayer, a person might gain an indulgence of, for example, 100 days. This meant that the remission of temporal punishment associated with that particular indulgence would be proportionate to performing 100 days of penance. Using “days” in this fashion confused some people who erroneously thought that the “days” ascribed to a particular indulgence denoted the amount of “time off” from purgatory that the penitent would receive. To eliminate the confusion, Pope Paul VI revised the Church’s practice in his *Enchiridion of Indulgences* (1968) which no longer attributes days to indulgenced works. Instead, indulgences are either plenary (all temporal punishment is removed) or partial (some temporal punishment is removed).

Like the dogma of purgatory, indulgences are part of the Church’s infallible teaching (the popes have “bound” us to the teaching). The Council of Trent, which also defined the dogma of purgatory, declared: Hence, it is necessary for all Catholics to believe in indulgences. To deny the Church’s power to grant indulgences is to deny a revealed truth of the Catholic faith. Since the power of granting indulgences has been given to the Church by Christ, and since the Church from the earliest times has made use of this Divinely given power, the holy synod teaches and ordains that the use of indulgences, as most salutary to Christians and as approved by the authority of the councils, shall be retained by the Church; and if further pronounces anathema against those who either declare that indulgences are useless or deny that the Church has the power to grant them.³²⁵

Didn’t the Church Once Sell Indulgences?

Unfortunately, hundreds of years ago there were certain abuses in the Church’s administration of indulgences, and it almost never fails that an anti-Catholic accuses the Church of having “sold indulgences” for pecuniary gain. Of course, whether there were abuses in granting indulgences has no bearing upon whether the doctrine of indulgences is true or false. There were also many abuses in the early apostolic Church, but that didn’t mean that the apostles threw out the Deposit of Faith and started over (which is essentially what the Protestant “Reformers” did). For example, just because the

Corinthians were abusing the Eucharist didn't mean that Paul told them to give up the Church's doctrines on the Eucharist (cf. 1 Cor 11:27-30).

Trumped-up charges of indulgence-selling are usually advanced by those who don't even know what indulgences are, and even if they did, would not accept the Church's authority to grant them.

It is true that, during certain periods in Church history, certain clergy of the Church did abuse the practice of administering indulgences. These abuses primarily concerned clerics asking for financial contributions from their parishioners. Although some of these clerics were motivated by selfish reasons, many others were motivated to raise money for the poor of the parish and other praiseworthy objectives. There is nothing intrinsically evil about encouraging the faithful to give alms to the poor, to build a church, or to endow a hospital in thanksgiving for receiving an indulgence. It is only when a priest deliberately requires a temporal price in consideration for a spiritual favor, otherwise known as "simony," that condemnation is warranted.³²⁶ But as a matter of official practice, the Catholic Church never sold indulgences. And even where abuses did occur, the faithful still received the great benefits of the indulgences, which nourished their spiritual lives and pleased God.³²⁷

While Protestants are quick to make a connection between the abuses involving indulgences and Luther's revolt in the sixteenth century, most of these varied and isolated abuses—and the Church's condemnation of them—came well before the Reformation. For example, the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) put limits on the use and benefits of indulgences granted for dedicating a church. Similar prescriptions were adopted at regional councils in Vienna (1311) and Ravenna (1317). Pope Boniface IX (1392) condemned certain clerics in the diocese of Ferrara who were exacting money in exchange for indulgences. Pope Martin V (1450) and Pope Sixtus IV (1478) also issued negative judgments concerning certain abuses of indulgences. In order to protect the great benefit of indulgences, the Council of Trent ordered all abuses to be abolished.³²⁸ In 1567, Pope St. Pius V canceled all grants of indulgences involving any fees. Given the Church's efforts to correct them, Luther's tirade against these abuses—and his ultimate rejection of the Catholic faith—is a perfect example of "throwing the baby out with the bathwater."

Scriptural Support for Indulgences

Scripture clearly teaches that God lessens the temporal punishment for sin based on the actions of others (which is precisely what an indulgence is). For example, in the Old Testament, we read that King Solomon loved many pagan women. In fact, he had 700 wives and 300 concubines! These associations ultimately led him to worship the women's pagan deities (cf. 1 Kg 11:1-8). Because Solomon's idolatry was a grievous breach of God's covenant, God would punish Solomon. He tells the king, "Since this has been your mind and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant" (1 Kg 11:11). The temporal punishment for Solomon's sin was the loss of his kingdom.

However, this punishment would not happen in Solomon's lifetime. God continues, "Yet for the sake of David your father I will not do it in your days, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son. However I will not tear away all the kingdom; but I will give one tribe to your son, for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen."³²⁹ Thus, "for the sake of David and Jerusalem," God lessens Solomon's temporal punishment by deferring the divestiture of his kingdom and keeping one tribe (Benjamin) under the dominion of Judah. In other words, God gives Solomon an indulgence. If it weren't for David's merits before God, God would have removed the entire kingdom from Solomon and during his reign.

God does a similar thing with another king of Israel named Ahab, in 1 Kings chapter 21. Ahab coveted a certain vineyard in Jezreel which was located near his palace. The vineyard was owned by a man named Namoth. Ahab tries to convince Namoth to sell or exchange it so that Ahab could take possession of it. But Namoth refuses, and Ahab in anger consents to Namoth's death. Like his predecessor Solomon, Ahab falls into the grave sin of idolatry. For these sins, God reveals through Elijah that He was going to destroy Ahab and his kingdom: "Behold, I will bring evil upon you; I will utterly sweep you away" (v.21).

Upon hearing these words, Scripture says that Ahab "rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted and lay in sackcloth, and went about dejectedly" (v.27). Ahab's severe penances make some satisfaction for his sins, and God responds by having mercy on him, saying, "Because he has humbled himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days; but in his son's days I will bring the evil upon his house" (v.29). As with Solomon, God gives Ahab an indulgence. Because of Ahab's penance, God lessens

Ahab's temporal punishments by deferring them to his successor's reign.³³⁰

Similarly, during the Exodus when God wanted to kill all the Jews as a punishment for their idolatry, Moses begs God to relent of His punishment by offering Him a penance of fasting for forty days and nights.³³¹ On account of Moses' sacrifice, God lessens the Jews' punishment by merely sending them a plague—a partial indulgence that preserves many of their lives.

Paul emphasizes how God has tempered His punishments of the Jews in spite of their sinfulness, since “they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers” (Rom 11:28). As with Solomon, Ahab and many other Jews of the Old Testament, God would lessen their temporal punishments because of the faithfulness and penances of their ancestors.³³² This is why Paul says, “For the gifts and the calling of God are without repentance.”³³³ God does not regret calling the Jews to salvation, for His promise to save them through Jesus Christ is unchangeable.³³⁴

Paul himself exercised authority to grant indulgences. In his First Letter to the Corinthians, Paul excommunicates a man who was having relations with his father's wife (5:1). Paul excommunicates this man from the Church by declaring, “you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (5:5). Many exegetes believe that Paul remits the punishment of excommunication in his Second Letter to the Corinthians (2:1-11). After referring to the punishment of a certain member of the Church and the need to forgive him, Paul says, “And to whom you have pardoned any thing, I also. For, what I have pardoned, if I have pardoned any thing, for your sakes have I done it in the person of Christ.”³³⁵ In this verse, Paul grants an indulgence for the temporal punishment God imposed through Paul's binding authority, and does so “in the person of Christ.”

How to Gain an Indulgence

To gain any indulgence, a person must first be Catholic. The Church's power to remit punishment through the keys is a jurisdictional power, and one must be subject to the Church's jurisdiction (that is, be a Catholic who is not excommunicated) in order to be subject to that power. The person must also be in a state of grace. Without grace, our penances have no merit in God's eyes and thus indulgences would avail us nothing. Moreover, a dead member of the body receives no inflow from the living members of the body,

and one who is in mortal sin is spiritually dead. Further, the person must perform an act to which the pope has specifically ascribed an indulgence (as we mentioned, these acts are found in the Church's Enchiridion or handbook on indulgences).³³⁶ Finally, the person must perform the indulgenced act with at least the habitual intention of gaining the indulgence.

To gain a plenary indulgence (complete remission of temporal punishment), the person must make a sacramental confession and receive the Eucharist. These sacraments do not have to be received on the day that the indulgenced work is performed, but should be received within a week before or after the work (but never more than twenty days before or after). The person must also pray for the intentions of the Sovereign Pontiff (the customary prayers are one Our Father, one Hail Mary, and one Glory Be). Finally, the person cannot have any attachment to sin, even venial sin. This means a person must not voluntarily retain any deliberate intention of permitting himself to commit venial sin. If any of these conditions are not met, the indulgence will be partial only. A person can gain only one plenary indulgence per day.³³⁷ The extent to which a person's punishment is remitted depends both upon the person's degree of charity and the manner in which he performs the indulgenced work.

There are three principal ways to gain a partial indulgence (multiple partial indulgences can be gained throughout the day). First, the Church grants a partial indulgence to those who raise their mind to God in humble confidence while performing their daily tasks. One raises his mind to God by piously invoking, even mentally, the names of Jesus, Mary, and the saints, for example: "Jesus, have mercy on me"; "Heart of Jesus, I trust in Thee"; "Mary Immaculate"; "St. Joseph, pray for me." Whether one uses these or the many other traditional invocations (also called ejaculations), or whether one's prayer is individual or spontaneous, is not important. What is important is that it comes from the heart. How easy and beneficial is this practice, and yet how few people actually do it!

Secondly, the Church grants a partial indulgence to those who, motivated by charity, perform the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. As we have seen, the spiritual works include actions such as instructing the ignorant and comforting the afflicted. The corporal works include feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. Finally, the Church grants a partial indulgence to those who, in a spirit of penance, abstain from something permitted and pleasing to them. For example, a person who enjoys wine and is able to drink it (for

example, he has no health problems, and it's not a day of fast) may choose to refrain from wine and drink water instead. We can think of countless other examples.

The Enchiridion also lists many prayers for which one may gain a partial indulgence. These prayers should be familiar to all Catholics, for example: Acts of faith, hope, charity, and contrition; the Guardian Angel prayer; the Angelus (the Regina Caeli during Easter); the Anima Christi; the Prayer Before a Crucifix; the Magnificat; the Memorare; the Hail Holy Queen (Salve Regina); the Tantum Ergo; the Come Holy Spirit; the Requiescant (Eternal rest grant unto them . . .); the many litanies (the Holy Name, Sacred Heart, Precious Blood, Mary, Joseph, the saints); the Sign of the Cross; and many others prayers and acts of piety. Indeed, Holy Mother Church has provided her children with many ways to lessen their punishments and increase their glory for heaven.

Certain indulgences are obtainable anytime and in almost any place, for example, reading Scripture continuously for a half hour or reciting five decades of the rosary in a church, family setting, or religious community. Plenary indulgences are granted for performing these pious practices, as well as for performing the Stations of the Cross or adoring the Blessed Sacrament for a half hour. Some indulgences are obtained on special days of the liturgical year, such as when certain prayers are recited, for example, on Holy Thursday, Good Friday, all Fridays during Lent, and All Souls' Day, to name a few. Other indulgences are obtainable on special occasions in one's life, such as First Communion, First Mass of newly-ordained priests, and the moment of death (*in articulo mortis*).³³⁸

Indulgences are also obtained through papal blessings, during diocesan synods and visits to the Patriarchal Basilicas in Rome. There are many other occasions for which the Church grants indulgences, reflecting the infinite mercy of God and His desire to free us from our debt of sin. Throughout the centuries, indulgences have inspired the faithful to good works and greater holiness. For more details, see Pope Paul VI's *Enchiridion on Indulgences* (1968).

The Blessed Virgin Mary has also revealed two promises for those who have been enrolled in the brown scapular.³³⁹ First, the Mother of God appeared to Simon Stock as Our Lady of then said, "Whoever dies wearing this scapular shall not suffer eternal fire." Simon made the Blessed Mother's promise known throughout the Church, and Catholics have been wearing the

brown scapular ever since. It is important to note that the Church does not attribute anything magical to the scapular or other sacramentals (the rosary, medals, holy water).³⁴⁰ The Church teaches that attributing the efficacy of prayers or of sacramental signs to their mere external performance, apart from the interior dispositions that they demand, is to fall into superstition (CCC 2111). Superstition is a grave error that is completely opposed to the Catholic faith. Instead, sacramentals remind and inspire Catholics to live their faith externally as well as internally. Mount Carmel on July 16, 1251 and gave him a scapular. She

In another private revelation, the Mother of God revealed to Pope John XXII in 1322 what is called the Sabbatine (or Saturday) Privilege. Our Lady told him, “I, the Mother of Grace, shall descend on the Saturday after their death, and whomsoever I shall find in purgatory, I shall free.” There are three conditions for obtaining this privilege. First, one must wear the brown scapular. Secondly, one must practice chastity according to his state in life. Thirdly, one must recite daily the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary (but any priest with faculties can change this third requirement into another pious work, such as reciting a daily rosary or fasting twice a week). The Carmelite Order (a religious order devoted to Our Lady of Mount Carmel) recommends that the third requirement be not reduced to anything less than the daily recitation of seven Our Fathers, seven Hail Marys and seven Glory Be to the Fathers.

Final Thoughts

Although God does not want us to go to purgatory, His strict justice and infinite holiness demand that we be freed from sin and all its effects before entering eternal beatitude. Not even the slightest hint of sin or its remnants can be in the presence of our Thrice-holy God, who shows “no partiality” to sinners.³⁴¹ Unfortunately, this truth gives many people the impression that purgatory is unavoidable. Some even pray that they simply “make it to purgatory.” These gloomy views are inconsistent with a Christ-centered life that is wholly focused on gaining virtue and growing in holiness. The fact is, we can avoid purgatory altogether. Jesus commanded us to “be perfect” in this life, and He doesn’t command the impossible (cf. Mt 5:48).

As we have seen, Holy Mother Church generously provides many ways to avoid purgatory and to assist those who are suffering there. We have learned

about the efficacy of prayer, penances, the sacraments, and indulgences. We have also learned about the value of patiently suffering the burdens of this life. Too many people are afraid to do penance, and too few recognize the value of suffering. These works not only make satisfaction for our sins but increase our grace in this life and our glory in the next. Surely, offering these works for the Holy Souls also redounds to our benefit, for Christ says, “the measure you give will be the measure you get, and still more will be given you” (Mk 4:24). Indeed, God will reward us in proportion to our generosity to the Holy Souls.

Ultimately, it comes down to removing in this life the causes of that which will detain us in the afterlife: sin. We can do this by living every day to do God’s will and not our own. In short, we must love God with all our hearts and our neighbor as ourselves. With God’s grace, we will not only be able to avoid mortal sin, but we will also be able to conquer habitual venial sins and sinful habits, which also blemish the soul.

Remember that God doesn’t ask most people to be heroic. Rather, God asks us to do little things, like having patience with others and offering small acts of self-denial. This was the secret to sanctity for Therese of Lisieux, the Little Flower. Establishing a practice of small penances during this life will not only will diminish or eliminate our need for purgatory, but will also bring us great peace and joy.

I hope that this book will have awakened in you a holy fear of purgatory, and inspired you to live a holy life so you won’t have to go there. Achieving such holiness in this life is difficult, but we can do it by the grace of God, which He offers us through Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church. As Paul says, “Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen” (Eph 3:20-21). May we be moved by God’s grace so that we can attain more than we ever thought possible. I wish to close this book by giving the preacher Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) the final words:

“In all you do, remember the end of your life, and then you will never sin” (Sir 7:36).

243 Mt 3:2 (DR); see also Mt 4:17; 11:20-21; 12:41; Mk 6:12; Lk 3:3,8; 5:32; 10:13; 11:32; 13:3,5; 15:7,10; 16:30; 17:3; 24:47 (all from DR).

244 Mt 3:8 (DR).

245 Lk 13:3 (DR); see also Lk 13:5 (DR).

246 Ps 34:13 (DR).

247 Cf. Jn 21:15-17.

248 One of the greatest examples in Scripture of bearing another's burden is that of Simon of Cyrene, who bore the burden of our Savior's Cross (Mt 27:32; Mk 15:21; Lk 23:26).

249 1 Pet 2:5. In the first part of verse 5, Peter says, "and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house . . ." This is reminiscent of Paul's teaching about "building" with "precious stones" which is tested in the "fire" of purgatory in 1 Corinthians 3. Thus, how we exercise the royal priesthood will determine whether or not we will have to go to purgatory.

250 There is a distinction between the "royal priesthood" of all the baptized (1 Pet 2:9) and the ministerial priesthood of the hierarchical Church (Pope, bishops, priests)—both of which participate in Christ's redeeming work in different ways.

251 1 Cor 3:9. See also Mk 16:20; Rom 8:28; 2 Cor 6:1. As Aquinas teaches, God wills us to be His co-workers because He wills intermediary causes to preserve the order of the universe and to communicate the dignity of causality to men. In the mystery of predestination, human freewill actions carry out God's eternal decrees.

252 Cf. Eph 5:23; 1 Cor 12:12,27.

253 1 Cor 13:8 (DR).

254 1 Cor 13:5.

255 Although some Protestants argue that God doesn't hear sinners (to claim that sinners cannot offer penances for the dead), those same Protestants must admit that God does hear sinners when they seek Him and repent of their sins. This shows the inconsistency of their argumentation

256 When a person is restored to grace through repentance and confession, his previous penances performed in a state of mortal sin do not become profitable (neither meritorious for eternal life nor satisfactory for punishment). Penance performed outside of the state of grace can never be pleasing to God (see Eph 2:8-9). Nevertheless, penances done outside of grace may leave a positive effect in a person (e.g., disposing the person to do penances in grace), and this positive effect is acceptable to God.

257 Mt 16:27

258 Rev 2:23. Penance does not profit the damned in hell because they are void of charity, nor the saints in heaven because they are perfected in charity.

259 Tob 12:8.

260 2 Macc 12:41-45; Bar 3:4; Gen 50:10; Num 20:29; Deut 34:8; Zech 9:11. There is a pious Catholic practice called the Heroic Act whereby a person pledges to God to offer all of his prayers and sacrifices during his life, as well as those suffrages that are offered for him after death, for the benefit of the Holy Souls. When Jesus cried out on the Cross, many people thought He was summoning deceased Elijah for assistance.²⁶³ When Jesus died, many souls were raised out of their graves and went into the city appearing to many people.²⁶⁴ In the Book of Revelation, we see the prayers of those on earth ascend into eternity as "incense" before God.²⁶⁵ These scriptures demonstrate that prayers from the living on earth influence those who are living in the after life, but who are not yet in heaven

261 In the book of Maccabees, we also see the high priest Onias and the prophet Jeremiah—who had been dead for many years—communicating with Judas Maccabeus and praying for the Jews on earth

262 Cf. Mt 17:1-3; Mk 9:4; Lk 9:30-31.

263 Cf. Mt 27:47,49; Mk 15:35-36.

264 Cf. Mt 27:52-53.

265 Rev 5:8; 8:4; see also Rev 6:9-11

266 Rev 5:8; 8:4.

267 Scripture refers to the deceased as "saints" in Mt 27:52; Eph 2:19; 3:18; Col 1:12; 2 Thess 1:10; Rev 5:8; 8:3-4; 11:18; 13:10.

268 Cf. Rev 6:9-11, where the saints in heaven respond to the imprecatory prayers of those on earth.

269 2 Cor 6:5,6 (DR).

270 Cf. Dan 10:1-21.

271 Cf. Acts 13:2-3; 14:23.

272 Eccl 2:3 (DR).

273 2 Sam 23:16; Ez 8:21-23; 9:5; Neh 1:4; 9:1; Tob 12:8; Esth 4:3,16; Ps 35:13;69:10; 109:24; Jer 36:9; Dan 6:18; 9:3; Joel 1:14; 1 Macc 3:47; 2 Macc 13:12.

274 Mk 2:20; see also Mt 9:15; Lk 5:35.

275 Mt 9:15; see also Mk 2:20; Lk 5:35.

276 Cf. Mt 4:2; Lk 4:2. Curiously, some fundamentalists nonetheless condemn fasting, based on Paul's injunctions in 1 Tim 4:1-3. However, Paul was condemning those heretics who believed matter was evil, which is why Paul says in the next verse that "everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving." Moreover, Jesus exhorts us to fast to atone for sin and even gives us instructions on how to fast (Mt 6:16-18; see also 9:15; Mk 2:20; Lk 5:35).

277 The Church no longer requires abstinence from dairy products during the prescribed days of fasting. However, the Church still requires abstinence from meat on all Fridays throughout the year, in accordance with the prescripts of the Conference of Catholic bishops. See canon law 1251. Also, canon 1253 allows the conference of bishops to permit the substitution of other forms of penance for abstinence and fast.

278 The Church allowed Catholics to anticipate this fast on December 23 (Sacred Congregation of the Council, December 3, 1959).

279 From the Greek *eleemosyne*

280 1 Cor 13:3 (DR). Paul's statement underscores that God accepts our penances only under the auspices of grace

281 3:33 (DR); see also Sir 4:1; 7:10; 12:3; 17:18; 29:15; 31:11 (DR). 282 Tob 4:11; see also Tob 4:12; 12:8-9.

283 Dan 4:24 (DR).

284 10:12 (DR).

285 Lk 11:41(DR).

286 Gen 28:22; Lev 27:30-32; Num 18:21,24,26,28; Deut 12:6,11,17; 14:22-24,28; 26:12,14; Neh 12:44; 13:5,12; Amos 4:4; Mal 3:8,10; Tob 1:6; 5:13; Jdt11:13; Sir 35:9; 1 Macc 3:49; 10:31; 11:35.

287 Cf. Gen 14:18-20.

288 Mt 10:10; Lk

289 1 Tim 5:18 See also 1 Cor 9:9; Deut 25:4.

290 Cf. Lk 21:1-4. Jesus points out that, even though the Pharisees would "tithe mint and rue and every herb," they neglected justice and the love of God (Lk 11:42). Jesus' teaching emphasizes that we must give alms with true charity from God's grace, and not out of legal obligation.

291 Prov 4:2. The "spiritual works of mercy" are as follows: To instruct the ignorant; to counsel the doubtful; to admonish sinners; to bear wrongs patiently; to forgive offenses willingly; to comfort the afflicted; and to pray for the living and the dead. The "corporal works of mercy" are as follows: To feed the hungry; to give drink to the thirsty; to clothe the naked; to shelter the homeless; to visit the sick; to ransom the captive; and, to bury the dead.

292 When a priest confers a sacrament, it is said to be effected *ex opere operato* (Latin, "from the work having been performed"). This means that God confers His grace through the sacrament by the very fact that the act was performed (the validity of the sacrament does not depend on the priest's personal holiness). However, the effect upon the one receiving the sacrament works *ex opere operantis* (Latin, "from the work of the worker"). This means that he who receives the sacrament determines the work's efficacy, according to his disposition to receive grace.

293 Because a newborn baby does nothing of his own will to contract Original Sin, he doesn't need to do anything to receive the sacrament of baptism which washes away Original Sin. His sin is

contracted by an extrinsic cause, and so it can be removed by an extrinsic cause. Because, with actual sin, a sinner engages his will, God requires the sinner to engage that same will to confess the sin in the Sacrament of Penance, which washes away

294 Cf. Rom 6:4-II.

295 For an in-depth analysis of the meaning of the keys, please see my book *The Biblical Basis for the Papacy* (Our Sunday Visitor).

296 Cf. Isa 22:22

297 The debt of temporal punishment is remitted according to the disposition of the penitent. The more frequently he approaches the sacrament, the more he is disposed to receive grace. As his grace increases, the stains of his sin decrease, which means the punishment required to remove the stains also decreases. A person's disposition to grace may be so great that, through frequent confession, his entire debt of punishment may be remitted

298 This may happen when a penitent declares to the priest in the confessional that he will not terminate his sinful lifestyle (e.g., living in adultery, maintaining a pro-abortion position, keeping a membership in Freemasonry, etc.).

299 E.g. Elizabeth, Nicholas, Henry Suso, John of Alvernia, Malachy, and Magdalen de Pazzi.

300 The Council of Trent even condemned those who said that the Mass "ought not to be offered for the living and the dead, for sins, punishments, satisfactions, and other necessities." Canon 3, Canons on the Sacrifice of the Mass, Session XXII (September 17, 1562).

301 For a detailed, Scriptural explanation of the Holy Mass, please see my book *The Biblical Basis for the Eucharist* (Our Sunday Visitor).

302 1 Cor 5:7-8 (DR).

303 Cf. Mt 26:26-28; Mk 14:22-24; Lk 22:19-20; 1 Cor 11:23-25.

304 In Hebrew, this Greek term comes from *zikaron* (*zakar*). In the context of the Passover meal, the term referred to making the event (the Passover) "truly present," not simply calling the event to mind. The only other time *anamnesis* is used in the New Testament is in Hebrews 10:3 where Paul is referring to the Levitical sacrifices under the Old Law.

305 Mal 1:11. Malachi uses the Hebrew *minchah* which is a singular noun to describe the sacrifice that will be offered "in every place" and "from the rising of the sun to its setting."

306 Cf. Heb 9:18-22.

307 Cf. Heb 5:6,10; 6:20; 7:15,17; see also Ps 110:4.

308 Because Jesus says, "if any one eats of this bread, he will live forever" (Jn 6:51) and "living forever" is the life of glory, partaking of the Eucharist on earth is the pledge of future glory in heaven.

309 1 Cor 11:27,29.

310 See, for example, Rom 2:2-3; 3:6,8; 5:16; 1 Tim 3:6; 5:12; Heb 6:2 where Paul uses the same word to describe eternal condemnation. Paul's penalty for receiving the Eucharist unworthily demonstrates that the Eucharist is not just a symbol (but instead the actual body of Christ) because one cannot be liable to eternal hell-fire for abusing a symbol.

311 Cf. 1 Cor 10:16-17. The Greek word for "participation" (*koinonia*) refers to an actual, intimate communion with the thing in question.

312 Jn 8:12; 9:5.

313 6:13. Many of the Church Fathers wrote about the sacrament of Extreme Unction, including Ambrose, Cyril of Alexandria, Ephraem, Hippolytus, John Chrysostom, Origen, and Tertullian.

314 Just as the sacrament of baptism is signified by a physical washing with water, the sacrament of the sick is signified by a physical anointing with oil. Water is connected to washing and oil to healing, which signifies that baptism is a spiritual regeneration and Extreme Unction is a spiritual healing.

315 Because spiritual healing is the principal effect of this sacrament, physical healing (the secondary effect) may not necessarily follow, except when it is requisite for the spiritual healing. This is exemplified by the paralytic in Luke's gospel (chapter 5). The principal effect of Christ's healing was the forgiveness of his sins (v.20), and the secondary effect was the physical healing of his malady

- (v.24). Because the sacrament may bring about physical healing, it can be repeated.
- 316 *Catechism of the Council of Trent* (South Bend, IN: Marian Publications, 1976), pages 314-415.
- 317 The Apostolic Blessing is always given in the old Latin rite: “*Ego facultate mihi ab Apostolic Sede tributa, indulgentiam plenariam et remissionem omnium peccatorum tibi concedo et benedico te. In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.*”
- 318 We must remember that prayers and good works are much more valuable than indulgences because indulgences remit temporal punishment, while prayers and good works also mean an increase of grace and merit for all eternity.
- 319 Cf. Pope Paul VI, *Indulgentiarum Doctrina* (January 1, 1967), Nos. 7-8.
- 320 Mt 16:19; CCC 1478.
- 321 Although the pope alone holds the keys, bishops in union with the pope share in the power of the keys. This means that bishops and their delegates can also grant indulgences subject to the pope’s ordination. Further, even one who is in mortal sin can grant indulgences, because mortal sin doesn’t cause a loss of jurisdiction and because he remits punishment by virtue of the merits in the Church’s treasury and not his own merits (or demerits).
- 322 Cf. *Summa Theologica*, Supp, Q. 25, Art 1
- 323 CCC 1471. The “living” means the one doing the indulgenced work. A person cannot apply an indulgence to another living person. Indulgences can only be applied to someone in accordance with the intention of the grantor, and since the Church applies the indulgence to the doer of the work, the doer cannot transfer the intention to another
- 324 Aquinas teaches that indulgences principally profit the living person who avails himself of an indulgence because he does the work for which the indulgence is granted; and secondarily and indirectly profit the dead for whom one does what is the cause of the indulgence (since that person doesn’t perform the indulgenced work, but only receives its benefits).
- 325 Council of Trent, Session 25 (December 4, 1563). See also Pope Leo X, *Exsurge Domine* (June 15, 1520); the Council of Constance, Session 8 (May 4, 1415); and Pope Clement VI, *Unigenitus* (January 27, 1343).
- 326 The term *simony* is taken from the man Simon who offered the apostles money in the hope that they would give him the power of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands (Acts 8:18-19).
- 327 The most infamous case of purported abuse involved one Johann Tetzel, who was a preacher of indulgences under Pope Julius II. In 1517, Pope Julius granted a plenary indulgence to those who confessed their sins, received the Eucharist, and contributed according to their means toward the construction of St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome. Luther accused Tetzel of selling these indulgences in Germany, which was a pretext for his doctrinal defection from the Church.
- 328 Council of Trent, Session 25 (December 3-4, 1563).
- 329 Vv.12-13. See also Isa 37:35.
- 330 God does the same thing with Joram, the son of Ahab. Joram also did evil in the sight of the Lord, but the Lord diminished his temporal punishments “for the sake of David his servant” (2 Kg 8:19).
- 331 Deut 9:18-19; 25-29.
- 332 In Rom 9:4-5, Paul refers to the gifts with which God had blessed the Jews which surely played a part in His deferring their immediate punishment for rejecting Him (see Rom 9:27; 11:4-5, 14, 20-21, 25). Note also that there is no verb (e.g. “belong”) in this passage (“*Israelites hos ho huiotesia kai ho doxa kai ho*”). Thus, it is incorrect to say that these gifts still belong to the Jews, which would undermine the Jews’ call to salvation exclusively through the New Covenant of Jesus Christ.
- 333 Rom 11:29 (DR). The Greek for “without repentance” (*ametameletos*) literally means “unregretted.” It is used only one other place in the New Testament (2 Cor 7:10). It is misleading to translate the word as “irrevocable” because that has given some people the erroneous impression that the Jews have an irrevocable covenant with God independent of Jesus Christ and the New Covenant.
- 334 This promise came through Abraham, not Moses (Gal 3:17-18). This means that the Covenant God gave through Abraham has been fulfilled in the New Covenant of Jesus Christ (Rom 4:16-17; Gal

3:29) and the “Old Covenant” God gave the Jews through Moses has been abolished by the same New Covenant of Christ (Rom 7:4; 2Cor 3:14; Gal 3:10-12; Eph 2:15; Col 2:14; Heb 7:12,18; 8:13; 10:9). As Paul says, in the New Covenant, “there is neither Jew nor Greek . . . for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28).

335 2 Cor 2:10 (DR).

336 Even though granting indulgences is a power of jurisdiction and the grantor cannot exercise jurisdiction over himself, a prelate of the Church can benefit from those goods that are offered to the other members of the body (such as when he receives the Eucharist and distributes it to others). This means that the pope (and bishops) can gain the benefits of indulgences, even when he is the grantor. If not, the pope (and bishops) would be worse off since he could not make use of the treasury of merits he himself dispenses.

337 There is one exception to this rule: when a person, having already gained a plenary indulgence during the day, later finds himself in danger of death. Such a person can gain a second plenary indulgence connected with the Apostolic Blessing given during the Last Rites. A person can gain multiple partial indulgences per day.

338 If a priest is not present to administer the last sacraments and the Apostolic Blessing, the Church still grants a plenary indulgence to the dying person if that person is properly disposed and has been in the habit of reciting some prayers during his life time.

339 A scapular is a cloth string with two quadrilateral segments of woolen cloth (usually depicting Jesus and Mary), which is draped around the collar bones, hence the name “scapular.”

340 A sacramental is a sacred sign which signifies the spiritual effects that are obtained through the graces of the Church (see CCC 1667-1673).

341 Cf. Lk 20:21; Acts 10:34; Rom 2:11; Gal 2:6; Eph 6:9; Col 3:25

Appendix

PRAYERS FOR THE SOULS IN PURGATORY³⁴²

A Prayer for the Souls in Purgatory

O most gentle Heart of Jesus, ever present in the Blessed Sacrament, ever consumed with burning love for the poor captive souls in purgatory, have mercy on the souls of Thy departed servants. Be not severe in Thy judgments, but let some drops of Thy Precious Blood fall upon the devouring flames. And do Thou, O merciful Savior, send Thy holy angels to conduct them to a place of refreshment, light, and peace. Amen.

A Prayer for the Dead

O God, the Creator and Redeemer of all the Faithful, grant unto the souls of Thy departed servants full remission of all their sins, that through the help of our pious supplications they may obtain that pardon which they have always desired, Thou Who lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

V. Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord.

R. And let perpetual light shine upon them.

V. May they rest in peace. Amen.

R. And may the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

A Prayer for our Dear Departed

O Good Jesus, Whose loving Heart was ever troubled by the sorrows of others, look with pity on the souls of our dear ones in Purgatory. O Thou Who didst “love Thine own,” hear our cry for mercy, and grant that those whom Thou hast called from our homes and hearts may soon enjoy everlasting rest in the home of Thy love in heaven. Amen.

V. Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord.

R. And let perpetual light shine upon them. Amen.

A Prayer for Deceased Parents

O God, who hast commanded us to honor our father and our mother, in Thy mercy have pity on the souls of my father and mother, and forgive them their trespasses, and make me to see them again in the joy of everlasting brightness. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Offering of the Precious Blood

Eternal Father, I offer Thee the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ in satisfaction for my sins, in supplication for the Holy Souls in purgatory and for the needs of Holy Church. Amen.

A Prayer for the Poor Souls

My Jesus, by the sorrows Thou didst suffer in Thine agony in the Garden, in Thy scourging and crowning with thorns, on the way to Calvary, and in Thy crucifixion and death, have mercy on the souls in purgatory, and especially on those that are most forsaken; do Thou deliver them from the dire torments they endure; call them and admit them to Thy most sweet embrace in Paradise. Amen.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory Be . . .

V. Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord.

R. And let perpetual light shine upon them.

V. May the divine assistance remain always with us.

R. And may the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

Prayer for the Poor Souls, from the Roman Canon of the Mass

Remember, O Lord, Thy servants and handmaids, N. and N., who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith and rest in the sleep of peace. To these, O Lord, and to all who rest in Christ, grant, we beseech Thee, a place of comfort, light and peace. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Prayer for a Deceased Priest

O God, Thou didst raise Thy servant, N., to the sacred priesthood of Jesus Christ, according to the Order of Melchisedech, giving him the sublime power to offer the Eternal Sacrifice, to bring the Body and Blood of Thy Son Jesus Christ down upon the altar, and to absolve the sins of men in Thine own holy name. We beseech Thee to reward his faithfulness and to forget his faults, admitting him speedily into Thy holy presence, there to enjoy forever the recompense of his labors. This we ask through Jesus Christ Thy Son our Lord. Amen.

A Prayer Addressed to the Poor Souls in Purgatory

O holy souls in purgatory, thou art the certain heirs of Heaven. Thou art most dear to Jesus, as the trophies of His Precious Blood, and to Mary, Mother of Mercy. Obtain for me, through thine intercession, the grace to lead a holy life, to die a happy death, and to attain to the blessedness of eternity in Heaven.

Dear suffering souls, who long to be delivered in order to praise and glorify God in Heaven, by thine unfailing pity, help me in the needs which distress me at this time, particularly (here mention your request), so that I may obtain relief and assistance from God.

In gratitude for this intercession, I offer to God on thy behalf the satisfactory merits of my prayers, works, joys, and sufferings of this day (week, month, or whatever space of time you wish to designate). Amen.

A Prayer for and to the Holy Souls in Purgatory

O most compassionate Jesus, have mercy on the souls detained in purgatory, for whose redemption Thou didst take upon Thyself our nature and endure a bitter death. Mercifully hear their sighs, look with pity upon the tears that they now shed before Thee, and by virtue of Thy Passion, release them from the pains due to their sins. O most merciful Jesus, let Thy Precious Blood reach down into Purgatory and refresh and revive the captive souls who suffer there. Stretch out to them Thy strong right hand, and bring them forth into the place of refreshment, light and peace. Amen.

O blessed souls! We have prayed for thee! We entreat thee, who art so dear

to God, and who art certain of never losing Him, to pray for us poor miserable sinners who are in danger of being damned and of losing God forever. Amen.

For Our Deceased Servicemen

Thou art all powerful, O God, and livest forever in light and joy. Look with pity and love, we beseech Thee, upon those men who have bravely fought and gallantly died for our country. By laying down their lives, they have showed supreme love for others. We implore Thee to accept their sacrifice and their belief in the justice of the cause for which they died. May their offering not be in vain. Deign to forgive any sins or misdeeds they may have committed. Bring them quickly, we implore Thee, into Thine august presence, where fear, sadness, mourning, and death no longer exist. Have pity, in Thy loving kindness, on those they leave behind. In Thine own inscrutable ways, make good their absence, and lavishly bestow Thy love and consolations upon those deprived of their presence. This we ask of Thee in the name of Jesus Christ, our King. Amen.

Eternal Rest

V. Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord.

R. And let perpetual light shine upon them.

V. May their souls, and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

R. Amen.

A Novena for the Poor Souls

Sunday

O Lord God Almighty, I beseech Thee by the Precious Blood which Thy divine Son Jesus shed in the Garden, deliver the souls in purgatory, and especially that one which is the most forsaken of all, and bring it into Thy glory, where it may praise and bless Thee forever. Amen.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory Be . . .

Eternal rest . . .

Monday

O Lord God Almighty, I beseech Thee by the Precious Blood which Thy divine Son Jesus shed in His cruel scourging, deliver the souls in purgatory, and among them all, especially that soul which is nearest to its entrance into Thy glory, that it may soon begin to praise Thee and bless Thee forever. Amen.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory Be . . .
Eternal rest . . .

Tuesday

O Lord God Almighty, I beseech Thee by the Precious Blood of Thy divine Son Jesus that was shed in His bitter crowning with thorns, deliver the souls in purgatory, and among them all, particularly that soul which is in the greatest need of our prayers, in order that it may not long be delayed in praising Thee in Thy glory and blessing Thee forever. Amen.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory Be . . .
Eternal rest . . .

Wednesday

O Lord God Almighty, I beseech Thee by the Precious Blood of Thy divine Son Jesus that was shed in the streets of Jerusalem, whilst He carried on His sacred shoulders the heavy burden of the Cross, deliver the souls in purgatory, and especially that one which is richest in merits in Thy sight, so that, having soon attained the high place in glory to which it is destined, it may praise Thee triumphantly and bless Thee forever. Amen.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory Be . . .
Eternal rest . . .

Thursday

O Lord God Almighty, I beseech Thee by the Precious Blood of Thy divine Son Jesus which He Himself, on the night before His Passion, gave as meat and drink to His beloved apostles and bequeathed to His holy Church to be the perpetual sacrifice and life-giving nourishment of His faithful people, deliver the souls in purgatory, but most of all, that soul which was most devoted to this Mystery of infinite love, in order that it may praise Thee

therefore, together with Thy divine Son and the Holy Spirit in Thy glory forever. Amen.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory Be . . .

Eternal rest . . .

Friday

O Lord God Almighty, I beseech Thee by the Precious Blood which Jesus Thy divine Son did shed this day upon the tree of the Cross, especially from His sacred hands and feet, deliver the souls in purgatory, and particularly that soul for whom I am most bound to pray, in order that I may not be the cause which hinders Thee from admitting it quickly to the possession of Thy glory, where it may praise Thee and bless Thee for evermore. Amen.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory Be . . .

Eternal rest . . .

Saturday

O Lord God Almighty, I beseech Thee by the Precious Blood which gushed forth from the sacred side of Thy divine Son Jesus in the presence of and to the great sorrow of His most holy Mother, deliver the souls in purgatory, and among them all, especially that soul which has been most devout to this noble Lady, that it may come quickly into Thy glory, there to praise Thee in her, and her in Thee, through all ages. Amen.

Our Father . . . Hail Mary . . . Glory Be . . .

Eternal rest . . .

On Every Day of the Novena

V. O Lord, hear my prayer.

R. And let my cry come unto Thee.

O God, the Creator and Redeemer of all the faithful, grant unto the souls of Thy servants and handmaids the remission of all their sins, that through our devout supplications, they may obtain the pardon they have always desired, Who lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

Eternal rest . . .

Prayer of St. Gertrude the Great

O Eternal Father, I offer Thee the Most Precious Blood of Thy Divine Son, Jesus, in union with the Masses said throughout the world today, for all the holy souls in Purgatory, and for sinners everywhere—for sinners in the Universal Church, for those in my own home, and for those within my family. Amen.

Prayer for the Dying

O Most Merciful Jesus, lover of souls, I pray Thee, by the agony of Thy most Sacred Heart, and by the sorrows of Thine Immaculate Mother, to wash in Thy Most Precious Blood the sinners of the whole world who are now in their agony and who will die today.

Heart of Jesus, once in agony, have mercy on the dying! Amen.

O Mother most merciful, pray for the souls in Purgatory!

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Salza is a well-noted Catholic apologist, author, and speaker. He is the creator of ScriptureCatholic.com, one of the most popular apologetics sites on the Internet. ScriptureCatholic.com is a veritable library of over 2,000 Scripture citations and over 800 quotes from the early Church Fathers that explain and defend the Catholic faith. The site also includes a popular Q&A section and other helpful resources.

John is a frequent guest and host on Catholic radio including Searching the Word and The Drew Mariani Show. John has his own apologetics feature on Relevant Radio called “Relevant Answers” which runs six times a day, seven days a week. John also has a daily apologetics spot on the Eternal Word Television Network’s (EWTN) Global Catholic radio program called “Catholic Q&A.” John has appeared numerous times on EWTN to discuss a variety of apologetics topics.

John is the author of *Why Catholics Cannot Be Masons* (TAN Books), as well as the following books by Our Sunday Visitor: *The Biblical Basis for the Catholic Faith*; *The Biblical Basis for the Papacy*; *The Biblical Basis for the Eucharist*; *The Biblical Basis for Tradition*; and, *Masonry Unmasked: An Insider Reveals the Secrets of the Lodge*. John is also the author of the booklet “Honor Your Mother, Defend Your Queen: A Marian Treasury” (Relevant Radio).

the BIBLICAL BASIS for PURGATORY

JOHN SALZA

Jesus taught us about it, and for centuries the Church has faithfully defined and defended it. Protestants deny it even exists, while many Catholics accept but fundamentally misunderstand it. Certain saints experienced a harrowing taste of it, and from it the Holy Souls cry out night and day.

It is purgatory: that place of purifying penance where souls saved by Christ are made perfect and acceptable to spend life eternal in heaven.

In *The Biblical Basis for Purgatory*, author and apologist John Salza (*Why Catholics Cannot Be Masons*) offers the definitive scriptural explanation of this distinctively Catholic doctrine. Building on the teachings of Christ and St. Paul, he shows how the exigence of a place of temporal punishment after death is not only a logical extension of what we know about the reality of sin and God's justice, but is also a supreme expression of God's love and mercy.



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