

WE HAVE FOUND THE TRUE FAITH

by Robert T. Hart



- WITH -

The Church or The Bible

by Father Arnold Damen, S.J.

(Only for those who sincerely seek the truth)

WE HAVE FOUND THE TRUE FAITH

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*"We have seen the True Light,
we have received the Heavenly Spirit,
WE HAVE FOUND THE TRUE FAITH,
worshipping the Undivided Trinity,
for the Trinity has saved us!"*

~ Catholic Byzantine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom ~

WE HAVE FOUND THE TRUE FAITH

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Introduction

Listen friends, this earth can be a pretty dark place. Suffering abounds, for the rich and the poor alike. The wealthy and famous scamper about the world in search of satisfying every whim, and never gain happiness. The poor and destitute search for simple sustenance and the cruelty of their world appears to scandalize the concept of a caring Creator. We are drawn to the notion that existence is meaningless chaos, yet something, *something*, has planted in our human nature, both the idea of perfection, and the idea of eternity. Faith in Jesus Christ, sown in the Jewish heart some four thousand years ago and brought forth in reality two thousand years ago, traverses the seemingly meaningless, as a full blown sail crosses the great stretches of the deep and dark oceans.

Approach with an open and loving heart, you seekers of the truth, and you will find profound meaning, profound beauty, and profound glory in the Heart of Christ and the teachings of the Catholic Church over the past twenty centuries. In short, you will find the Reason you were born. You will find Truth.

Yes, this booklet is written to that *“you may know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”* (John 8:32). When one has come to know the freedom and joy that come hand in hand with the true Faith, one cannot help but to come to share in the sentiments of the Heart of Christ. His Sacred Heart burns with incomprehensible desire that all *“come to the knowledge of the truth”* (1 Tim. 2:4) that they may know the joy of eternal salvation. It is my desire therefore (as a humble recipient of this truth), that by means of this little work I may cause as many as possible to have the joy of saying with me: **“We have found the True Faith!”**

The Existence of God

I have written this work with the presumption that the reader believes there is an All-powerful Creator (God) who made all that exists. Yet for anyone who may be skeptical even of this, I offer the following simple considerations:

Our first consideration concerning the existence of God deals with the orderliness of things. When one sees a clock, an automobile or a computer, because of the marvelous orderliness of these objects, no sane

person would say that these things came into existence on their own. No reasonable person would, for a minute, believe that accidental forces caused all those pieces of such precision to both take shape and fall into the proper place so as to produce any one of these marvelous machines. Only a being (or beings) of intelligence and ability could have designed and built such orderly and useful works.

How much greater is the orderliness of the material universe around us! Think of the orderliness between just the sun and the earth. The earth is placed at just the right distance from the sun to support life. Then, the revolution of the earth and its orbit around the ever-burning sun gives us night and day as well as the four seasons with their variations in weather so that we can plant and harvest. This arrangement also produces for us the vital water cycle and many other vital activities making life possible on the face of the earth. An intelligent being must have created them and arranged them.

Beyond this we must consider the far more marvelous orderliness in the living creatures on earth. If we all take for granted that a computer, which has no life had to be crafted by an intelligent being, how much more so a living creature. Forgetting the marvels found in the plant and animal kingdoms, let us advance at once to the human creature and consider how marvelously it is fashioned. It lives, it breathes, it moves. It has the capacity of healing itself. It can think, speak and learn. It has the ability to make choices. It can reproduce. And it is aware of its own existence. How extremely far above the marvels of the most advanced computer is the human being!

If we are well aware that computers and other such man made objects could only be made by intelligent beings, how much more so the human being. An Intelligent Being must have created them and the entire universe. Only a Being of infinite power could have created something out of nothing. That Being we call God. And if we are honest, we all know this intuitively.

God has Revealed Himself

The vast majority of people do believe in God, and that is certainly good. The problem is that the devil and wicked men have sewn so many seeds of lies and error in the world that, from a human standpoint, * it is not

* We say, *from a human standpoint*, because on the spiritual level, if we honestly seek the truth without regard to the cost, and ask God for it, He will surely grant it.

always easy to come to know the truth about God. Centuries of efforts to obscure the truth have brought us to the point where today we find so many different religions and belief systems in our world — and these continue to multiply. It should be clear to anyone that they all cannot be true, for the doctrines held by these various groups differ from and contradict each other.

Aware of this, many throw their hands up in hopelessness and choose to forget about religion altogether. If we are honest, however, we know that this is no solution. Others, instead, choose to make their own personal religion in their heart, choosing for themselves whatever *seems* good to them. But this cannot be the solution either. For it can no more *guarantee* that one is on the path of truth than any of the other man-made religions in the world.

We know (as briefly shown above) that there must be a God that created everything in this well-ordered universe. Yet, that which we can know about God through his Creation is very limited. Therefore, to find out more we must look deeper to see if this God of Creation has somewhere revealed more of Himself to men. For, if we can know with certainty from created things that God exists, there remain many things about Him and about what He may expect of his creatures that we cannot know without an explicit revelation. The same is true between human beings. I can know something about a person I have never met by examining his home, his work, his clothing and his other possessions, but how little I really know him unless he in some manner communicates with me.

Today many treat the word “religion” as a dirty word; as if all that religion stands for is corrupt, man-made institutions. Nevertheless, the word “religion” really signifies *God’s revelation to men*. If God has publicly revealed Himself to men, it is by a religion — a belief system by which we can know the truth about God and learn to do what is pleasing to Him. Take note that I say “A” religion. That is, not by various religions or belief systems, but only by one — the religion He Himself has given us.

There can only be one religion because God is one. If God has really revealed Himself to us, He cannot have done so in contradictory ways. For instance, the Jewish religion teaches that Jesus Christ *is not* God, whereas the Catholic religion teaches Jesus Christ *is* truly God. Either He is God or He is not God, but both statements cannot be true. Thus, both religions cannot be true. Or again, the Catholic Church teaches that the rite of Christian baptism removes original sin from the soul and makes him an adopted child of God worthy of Heaven. Many other Christian denominations teach that baptism is only a symbol and thus has no effect on the soul whatsoever. Here again, we see clearly that since both statements

cannot be true, both of these religions cannot be true. And, following this logic to its natural end, we can easily conclude that there can be but one true religion in the world by which God has revealed Himself to men.

Here it may be good to also state that various religions may have *some* truth, but in those points where they differ from the one true religion revealed by God, they certainly contain falsehoods that will cause us to go astray.

Thus, for those who really desire to know the truth about God and about what their duties are toward Him who created them, the only choice left is to seek out the one true Faith — to find which of the religions of the world is the one that is truly revealed by God.

God Deserves Our Respect and Obedience

In our society today, there is a peculiar tendency to reduce God to human level while raising ourselves up to something equal to God. Therefore, before going on to discuss the one true religion, it seems necessary to bring forth a fundamental truth, namely, that Almighty God is the Creator of all that exists and that we human beings, however intelligent and gifted we may be, are his creatures, fashioned and created by Him. That intelligence and those gifts we possess were given to us by Him and are to be gratefully used to honor Him.

It takes an All-powerful Being to create something out of nothing. Only God can do this. Human beings, with all their science, cannot create from nothing so much as a vile little cockroach. And, if we intelligent humans cannot do this, then certainly things did not come into existence by themselves. No, it was God, with a simple act of his Will, who created the entire universe and all that it contains, with its beauty, variety, order, harmony and utility. And with his thought, He continually sustains, in every minute detail, of all that He has created.

God has also created you. And He has created all that you have and all that is necessary for your sustenance. He thinks of you at every moment or you would immediately return the nothingness out of which He originally drew you.* What motivates God to do this? It is certainly not out of any necessity; for, unlike you, God is perfectly and infinitely

* While it is true that each human body receives its substance from its particular parents, the human race as a whole (as with everything else in creation) was originally created from nothing. Each human soul (that which animates the body) is created immediately by God at conception.

happy and self-sufficient in Himself. What motivates Him then, is his *infinite goodness* which wants to share his life, love and happiness with others. Thus He has *freely* created you and me and all other intelligent beings with which He can do this. Since He created you and me with so much love, and sustains us at every moment with so much love, do we not owe this same God something in return?

What would you say of a child who showed no respect or obedience to his parents? This child will not obey his parents. He refuses to call them Dad and Mom. He refuses to pick up his clothes, to wash his hands, or to do anything else he is told. Yet, the parents brought him into the world. The parents take complete care of him at every moment: feeding, clothing, bathing and teaching him. He could not even *survive* without them. When they ask something of him, it is for his good, so that he will mature to become a civilized and respectable human being. Don't the parents have a right to expect obedience and respect from this child? And, isn't it right that the parents should be justly indignant with such a child and punish him for his contempt and ingratitude?

It is exactly the same with Almighty God, yet on a much greater scale; for the difference between God and any of his creatures is infinitely greater than the difference between a parent and his child. God is infinite, eternal, self-sufficient, all-powerful, all-knowing, all-just, and all-loving. On the other hand, we are tiny insignificant beings created out of nothing. Compared to God we are completely ignorant and powerless, and we depend on Him for everything. Isn't it only just to consider that we owe God the utmost respect and obedience? And, doesn't it make sense that God should be indignant with us if we refuse to give Him this due?

God is all-loving, and out of his sheer goodness He wishes to bring each of us to everlasting bliss in Heaven of which *"it is written: That eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him"* (1 Corinthians 2:9). Yet, God is also all-just, and consequentially, those who refuse Him this due respect and obedience merit the punishment of the eternal fires of Hell.

Having seen that we have certain duties before Almighty God, we have all the more reason to find the true religion so as to come to understand clearly those duties and how to fulfill them.

The True Religion is the Catholic Faith

And so we come to the whole point of this little booklet: to make known that God has revealed Himself to us by the religion that He Himself has established. And, through that religion He invites all to come

to embrace the true Faith that they may have eternal life. So, what is the true religion? Let us tarry no longer. The true religion that God has revealed for the salvation of every soul is the Catholic religion. The Roman Catholic Church possesses and preserves, whole and entire, the true Faith given to it by its founder, Our Lord Jesus Christ, approximately two thousand years ago.

If you find this bold declaration difficult to believe, I ask you to please put aside all previous bias and read on. I must also ask you not to judge the Catholic Faith on the failure of certain of the Church's ministers who have, in present times (as well as in times past), sadly scandalized both those outside and inside its fold. Such a judgment would, indeed, be a grave mistake. For, the Faith that the Church holds cannot be judged on the actions of such ministers. If its own members were scandalized by the action of these ministers, then obviously the Faith of the Church, the religion that she teaches as coming from God, is something different that what has been witnessed in these sinful men.

Furthermore, its founder, Jesus Christ stated: "*It is impossible that scandals should not come: but woe to him through whom they come*" (Luke 17:1). Therefore, we can certainly expect scandals — they always have been and they certainly always will be. So, putting the scandals of particular churchmen aside, let us take a look at that which really matters: the claims of the Catholic Church and what she actually teaches as coming from God.

The Historical Existence of Jesus Christ

The Catholic Church claims to be founded by Jesus Christ Himself. Therefore, to show that the Catholic Church is the true religion revealed by God, it is necessary first to show that Jesus Christ truly existed and that He is whom He claimed to be — God made man. The existence of Jesus Christ is not hard to prove and no authentic historian would deny this. For his existence is well established not only from ancient Christian sources, but also from several ancient non-Christians sources.

Christian Sources

Among the Christian sources we have first of all the faithful Apostles of Jesus Christ. These were the men who were closest to Christ, who lived and traveled with Him during his three years of preaching and making known his doctrine. After his mission was completed, they continued preaching his same doctrine through countless trials even unto death. All but one (St. John) ended by suffering martyrdom for the Faith in Jesus Christ they preached. Numerous are the disciples, contemporary

with the Apostles who suffered martyrdom too. Their choice to retain their faith rather than to save their mortal lives gives testimony to their belief in Christ and his revelation.

Beyond this we have the four Gospels written by the Apostles (St. Matthew and St. John) or their direct disciples (St. Mark the disciple of St. Peter and St. Luke the disciple of St. Paul). These Gospels contain the story of the life and mission of Jesus Christ. They also give us an accurate historical setting in which these events of his life took place. All were written within the first 100 years after Christ and all are in agreement with one another. As their authenticity can in no way be reasonably denied, these too give their testimony.

Non-Christian Sources

While there are admittedly only a few non-Christian sources providing evidence of the historical reality of Jesus Christ, this is certainly something to be expected. The reason for this is clear: the land of Galilee was a remote and relatively unimportant area of the Roman Empire. Therefore, what went on there in such ancient times did not get much attention. Even in our modern times of instant global communication, the vast majority of westerners hear little, if any, of the events that occur in remote places such as Papua New Guinea or Cape Verde. Unless such events have an immediate global impact, we ordinarily know nothing of them. Hence, we can understand why we find little reported in non-Christian sources of Jesus Christ, who spent his thirty-three years upon the earth in the insignificant region of ancient Galilee.

Even so, in the secular, non-Christian historical record there do exist a few clear references giving testimony to the reality of Jesus Christ. These include reports from Tacitus, Pliny the Younger, Suetonius and Lucian. These report Him as living in the same time and place recorded in the Gospels, and agree in other pertinent facts as well.

Tacitus (A.D. 54-119) was a Roman historian. He reported that Emperor Nero had placed the blame on Christians for the fire that destroyed Rome in order to advert any suspicion from himself. While Tacitus was no sympathizer with Christianity (as we shall see), he gives clear testimony to the reality of Jesus Christ as a historical person. In his report he says:

Nero fastened the guilt ... on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of ... Pontius Pilatus, and a most

mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome...

Pliny the Younger, Governor of Bithynia, wrote to the Emperor Trajan (circa. A.D. 61-115) asking how to deal with the Christians in his jurisdiction. For, as he had experienced, they could be found guilty of no crime at all — except, of course, that of their Christian faith. In one letter he states:

They were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god, and bound themselves by a solemn oath, not to any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up

As you can see then, both Christian and non-Christian sources all correlate to give unquestionable evidence that Jesus Christ is a real, historical person. The non-Christian sources mentioned here, as well as others, also give evidence to the historical accuracy of the Gospels. Furthermore, the upright lives of heroic virtue of the human authors of the Gospels also give testimony to their veracity — we can find no grounds whatsoever to suspect deceit. Thus we have good reason to believe that the Gospels give us accurate accounts of the events surrounding the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is Who He Claimed To Be

Jesus is the long awaited Messiah (also often spelled “Messiah”)

The next question we must ask is whether this historical person of Jesus Christ is truly who He claimed to be, namely, the Messiah long awaited by the Jews and the Eternal Son of the living God. This is no small matter. For if He is not who He claimed to be, then He can only be a liar and an imposter. Instead of deserving to be carefully listened to and heeded, He would be deserving of our contempt. But as we shall see, He is who He claimed to be.

We can ascertain that Jesus is the Messiah for which the Jews waited so many years to come because He fulfilled all the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah.* The prophets of the Old Testament generally announced two events — one that was to be fulfilled in the near

* The only prophecies He did not fulfill are those which must necessarily yet be fulfilled in the future.

future and the other to be fulfilled at a much later time. The reason for this two-fold manner of prophecy was so that after the first prophecy was fulfilled, the second (which must be awaited) would be confirmed.

The prophecies of Isaias were given to us around 700 years before Christ. To confirm the veracity of his prophecies concerning Christ, he first foretold three events which soon took place: 1) The deliverance of Jerusalem besieged by two kings; 2) the defeat of King Sennacherib; 3) the destruction of Jerusalem by King Nabuchadonosor (often spelled Nebuchadnezzar). Here are some of his prophecies he gave concerning Christ the Messiah:

The Messiah would convert idolatrous nations (Chapter 2 & others); He would be born of a virgin mother (Ch. 7); He would be adored by kings in his cradle (Ch. 49:23 & 60:1-6); He would have a precursor who would prepare the people for Him (Ch. 40); He would be a man of sorrows (Ch. 53:3); He would suffer various torments, for upon Him would be laid the punishment for the sins of the whole human race (Ch. 53); He would not open his mouth to complain (Ch. 53:7); He would give his life because He willed to (*i.e.* freely), to expiate sin (Ch. 53:7). He would pray for his enemies (Ch. 53:7); He would be regarded as a criminal (Ch. 53:12); He would reign over the world as recompense for his death (Ch. 53:9-12 & 54:5); His Church, his spouse, composed almost entirely of gentile nations, would give him many children (Ch. 54:1-8).

In Psalm 21 (Ps. 22) we find such a magnificent and detailed prophecy concerning the Passion of Christ that it could easily be taken for an eyewitness account.

Jesus Christ is God

In the Gospels we read that when the question of being Divine was put before Jesus as He stood on trial before the Jewish high priest, He answered in the affirmative:

*...the high priest said to him: I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us if thou be the Christ the Son of God.**

Jesus saith to him: Thou hast said it. Nevertheless I say to you, hereafter you shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

* God is one Being of Three Divine Persons: the Father, Son and Holy Ghost (or Holy Spirit). Each of these Three Divine Persons is equally God. Since this truth revealed to us by Jesus Christ cannot be fully comprehended by man, we call it a *mystery* — the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

Then the high priest rent his garments, saying: He hath blasphemed; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now you have heard the blasphemy:

What think you? But they answering, said: He is guilty of death (Matthew 26: 63-66).

His words, virtues and miracles

Now if Jesus were not the true Son of God, He certainly would be guilty of a serious sin of blasphemy for making Himself out to be Divine when He was not. Yet, his words, his virtues and his miracles are three witnesses testifying to the fact that He was telling the truth — He was, indeed, God. Even those who refused to believe in Him acknowledge these three witnesses. For example we find the witness to his miracles and to his words in the following passage from the Gospel of St. John:

*But of the people many believed in him, and said: When the Christ cometh, **shall he do more miracles, than these which this man doth?** The Pharisees heard the people murmuring these things concerning him: and the rulers and Pharisees sent ministers to apprehend him. [Then, after these ministers had heard Jesus teaching in the temple they] came to the chief priests and the Pharisees. And they said to them: Why have you not brought him? The ministers answered: **Never did man speak like this man** (John 7:31-32, 46).*

So, merely because of the words He spoke, the ministers of the Pharisees could not bring themselves to fulfill their duty to apprehend Him. In another passage, after Jesus had finished teaching, we read:

And it came to pass when Jesus had fully ended these words, the people were in admiration at his doctrine. For he was teaching them as one having power, and not as the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 7:28-29).*

Of course we today can still read Jesus' words in the Gospels and see that they are full of celestial light and wisdom.

The hard-hearted Pharisees who made Jesus their enemy also give testimony to his miracles. This they do by their very fear of them. After Jesus worked his most stupendous miracle of raising his friend Lazarus from the grave — who had been dead for four days — we find them in council with the chief priests deliberating on what to do:

* *power*: other translations have “authority.”

*Many therefore of the Jews, who...had seen the things that Jesus did, believed in him. But some of them went to the Pharisees, and told them the things that Jesus had done. The chief priests therefore, and the Pharisees, gathered a council, and said: **What do we, for this man doth many miracles? If we let him alone so, all will believe in him; and the Romans will come, and take away our place and nation. ... From that day therefore they devised to put him to death** (John 11: 45-48, 53).*

His virtues become self-evident by a study of his life from his birth in the stark poverty of Bethlehem to his heroic prayer of forgiveness for his executioners as He hung dying on the Cross. Thus it is no wonder that countless are the non-believers over the centuries that recognize Him as one of extraordinary virtue. Even the Muslims and many Jews recognize Him for this.

Yet if Jesus Christ is upheld by so many as a good and virtuous man, why is it that He is not also recognized as the Eternal Son of God that He claimed to be? How can He be considered good, upright, honest, or virtuous if He were to have lied about who He really was in a matter so serious? If He claimed to be God and was not, that would be the height of folly! He could not be called upright and virtuous but only be considered as a fool and a madman! Since it is clear that He was neither a fool nor mad, He must, indeed, be the Eternal Son of God He claimed to be!

Only through Jesus Christ can we be Saved

We have established that Jesus Christ existed. We have established that He was who He claimed to be: the Messiah and the Eternal Son of God. Since He was God and came to teach us the truth about God, it is imperative that we who are God's creatures listen to what He has to say and heed his words. Let us look, therefore, at what He has said:

First of all He made it clear that, since He was the only one who could pay the infinite price for our sins, there is no way to be saved from them and thus gain eternal life in Heaven except through Him:

Amen, amen I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All others, as many as have come, are thieves and robbers: and the sheep heard them not. I am the door. By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved: and he shall go in, and go out, and shall find pastures. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep (John 10:7-11).

Further on in St. John's Gospel, Jesus reaffirms this teaching again: *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father, but by me"* (John 14:6).

Since Jesus made claim that He Himself is the ONLY way to salvation, to eternal life in Heaven, and that there is no other way, we must say again that He cannot be *just* a good and virtuous man. For, no man who would make such bold claims about himself that are not true can be considered a just or holy. Thus, either Jesus is God and savior as He claimed to be or He is a worthless charlatan. There can be no in-between. But with the testimony we have in our possession, we have every reason to believe that Jesus Christ was no imposter. Rather, He is the long-awaited Messiah, the Son of God and only Savior of our souls.

Only through the Religion Jesus founded can we be Saved

Next, concerning what Jesus has said, Jesus told us that there are certain things we must do to be saved by Him and enter Heaven. The first thing we must do is to be baptized, for Jesus stated: *"Amen, amen I say to thee, unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."* When in reply He was asked how a man can be born again, Jesus replied: *"Amen, amen I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit. Wonder not, that I said to thee, you must be born again"* (John 3:3, 5-7).

From the time of the Apostles, these words were always understood to mean that one must be properly baptized into the Church to be saved. Furthermore, in his last word to his Apostles *before* ascending into Heaven, Jesus solemnly declared:

All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Going therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world (Matthew 28:18-19).

We see this mandate being carried out by St. Peter as he ends the very first sermon he gave *after* Jesus' Ascension:

But Peter said to them: Do penance, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins: and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are far off, whomsoever the Lord our God shall call.

And with very many other words did he testify and exhort them, saying: Save yourselves from this perverse generation.

They therefore that received his word, were baptized; and there were added in that day about three thousand souls (Acts of the Apostles 2:28-41).

The Mystical Body of Christ, the Church

Thus, the Church has from the beginning baptized all of its converts without exception. Only Baptism incorporates souls into what is called *the Mystical Body of Christ*. Only by Baptism into this Body can souls receive the supernatural life of sanctifying grace which makes them children of God and worthy of the everlasting life of Heaven. For again, as Jesus said: *“unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”*

As the Bible teaches, this Mystical Body of Christ is the Church. It is made up of the members of the Church, with Jesus Christ as its invisible head:

So we being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another (Romans 12:5).

And he [Jesus Christ] is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he may hold the primacy (Colossians 1:18).

The Unity of Christ’s Church & One Body of Doctrine

It is from Him who is the head that this supernatural life of sanctifying grace flows to all the members of the Body. The Bible also teaches that this Mystical Body of Christ, the Church, is *unified* under its one shepherd or head. Jesus stated:

And other sheep I have, that are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd (John 10:16).

And at the Last Supper before He died, this infallible prayer for the *unity* of his Apostles and their disciples arose to the Father from Jesus’ lips:

*I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou hast given me out of the world [i.e. the Apostles]. (...) Sanctify them in truth. Thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for them do I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. And **not for them only do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in me;***

That they all may be one, as thou, Father, in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me (John 17:6,17-21).

Here it is important to note that Jesus prayed for this sanctifying unity *"in the truth"* not only for his first Apostles, but also for *those who would come after them*. Finally, in another passage, St. Paul instructs those who desire to follow Jesus Christ:

... keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. One body and one Spirit; as you are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and Father of all (Ephesians 4:3-6).

Being that the Church is unified, made one by God, especially in *faith*, it becomes clear that this one true Church of Christ is composed of *only one body of doctrine*. This means the Body of Christ cannot be a conglomeration of many churches with various conflicting doctrines. For there is but *"one faith."* It is unity of belief that draws other souls to come to believe, whereas conflicting doctrines as seen among the many false "churches" turn souls away in anguish and frustration.

Ever Pure in Doctrine through a Divine Promise

How is it that the Catholic Church is able to keep this same body of doctrine, this *"one faith,"* given to it by Christ free from corruption throughout the ages? The Church remains pure in its doctrine from generation to generation by the Divine promise of Jesus Christ. As we have seen, He prayed for this unity for his Apostles and for those who would come after them. When He founded his Church, He established the Apostle Peter as the visible head,* promising it protection from all corruption:

And I say to thee: That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against It (Matthew 16:18).

If at any time the Church were to formally teach some error, something other than the pure doctrine of Christ, the gates of hell would have prevailed against it. But this has never happened, nor can it. For, God has ordained and the Bible teaches that *"the church of the living God"* is *"the pillar and ground of the truth"* (1Timothy 3:14-15).

* While St. Peter and his successors (the Popes throughout the ages) are the *visible* head on earth, Jesus Christ remains the Church's *invisible* head in Heaven.

Yes, if one studies an unbiased history of the Catholic Church (*i.e.* an objective study of the established facts), one finds that it has remained faithful to the same body of truth entrusted to it from its foundation. This is a *moral miracle* which, considering the corruption of man, can only be explained by Divine protection — just as we have seen Jesus Christ promised it.

Examples of the Church's Constant Fidelity in her Teaching

To give an example, we can consider the Church's (presently very unpopular) teaching against the use of artificial birth control (contraception). Contriving artificial means to prevent conception was held as seriously sinful by the Church from apostolic times.* To this day

* For example, here are a few teachings from the early Church Fathers:

Because of its divine institution for the propagation of man, the seed is not to be vainly ejaculated, nor is it to be damaged, nor is it to be wasted (Clement of Alexandria, The Instructor of Children, 2:10:91:2 [A.D. 191]).

Why do you sow where the field is eager to destroy the fruit, where there are medicines of sterility [oral contraceptives], where there is murder before birth? You do not even let a harlot remain only a harlot, but you make her a murderess as well.... Indeed, it is something worse than murder, and I do not know what to call it; for she does not kill what is formed but prevents its formation. What then? Do you condemn the gift of God and fight with his [natural] laws? ... Yet such turpitude... the matter still seems indifferent to many men — even to many men having wives. In this indifference of the married men there is greater evil filth; for then poisons are prepared, not against the womb of a prostitute, but against your injured wife. Against her are these innumerable tricks (John Chrysostom, Homilies on Romans, 24 [A.D. 391]).

I am supposing, then, although you are not lying [with your wife] for the sake of procreating offspring, you are not for the sake of lust obstructing their procreation by an evil prayer or an evil deed. Those who do this, although they are called husband and wife, are not; nor do they retain any reality of marriage, but with a respectable name cover a shame. Sometimes this lustful cruelty, or cruel lust, comes to this, that they even procure poisons of sterility [oral contraceptives] ... Assuredly if both husband and wife are like this, they are not married, and if they were like this from the beginning they come together not joined in matrimony but in seduction. If both are not like this, I dare to say that either the wife is in a fashion the harlot of her husband or he is an adulterer with his own wife (Augustine, Marriage and Concupiscence, 1:15:17 [A.D. 419]).

Who is he who cannot warn that no woman may take a potion [an oral contraceptive or an abortifacient] so that she is unable to conceive or condemns in herself the nature which God willed to be fecund? As often as she could have conceived or given birth, of that many homicides she will be held guilty, and, unless she undergoes suitable penance, she will be damned by eternal death in

the same Catholic Church holds to the same teaching. It continues telling its members that this action is seriously sinful. It tells them that those guilty of this sin cut themselves off from the life of sanctifying grace which alone saves them from Hell and gives them a right to Heaven.

On the other hand, if we look at all other Christian denominations on this point, we find that up until the early 20th century, all of them held this same teaching as the Catholic Church. But in the 1930 Lambeth Conference, the Anglican “church” *changed* its teaching and declared that there were certain circumstances when birth control could be considered morally acceptable. Not long after, it decided it was acceptable to married couples in any circumstance. And soon nearly all the other denominations followed suit until the Catholic Church was virtually alone in faithfully holding fast to the same original teaching handed down to us from the Apostles.

Let us consider well that if a teaching is changed, that teaching was either wrong before it was changed or after. Either way, it was at one time wrong. Thus it is clear any “church” that changes its teaching at any time cannot be *“the pillar and ground of the truth.”*

We can speak similarly of Christ’s teaching on divorce and remarriage. The Catholic Church has from the beginning forbidden this practice as seriously sinful, based on Christ’s clear words in the Gospel, and the understanding of these words handed down to us from apostolic times.* Jesus said:

[continued from previous page] *hell. If a woman does not wish to have children, let her enter into a religious agreement with her husband; for chastity is the sole sterility of a Christian woman (Cæsarius, Sermons, 1:12 [A.D. 522]).*

Where then are those who dare to mutilate [sterilize] themselves, seeing that they drawn down the apostolic curse, and accuse the workmanship of God, and take part with the Manichees? (John Chrysostom, Commentary on Galatians, 5:12 [A.D. 395]).

* For example, here again are a few teachings from the early Church Fathers:

What then shall the husband do, if the wife continues in this disposition [adultery]? Let him divorce her, and let the husband remain single. But if he divorces his wife and marries another, he too commits adultery (Shepherd of Hermas, 4:1:6 [A.D. 80]).

You dismiss your wife, therefore, as if by right and without being charged with wrongdoing and you suppose it is proper for you to do so because no human law forbids it; but divine law forbids it. Anyone who obeys men ought to stand in awe of God. Hear the law of the Lord, which even they who propose our laws must

...whosoever shall put away his wife, excepting for the cause of fornication, maketh her to commit adultery: and he that shall marry her that is put away, committeth adultery (Matthew 5:32).

While unfortunately today many Catholics — unworthy of the name and being caught up with the spirit of the world — do not abide by this teaching, this only makes the argument stronger. For the Church, the “*pillar and ground of truth*,” is being Divinely protected from corruption in its doctrine even if many of its own do not abide by that same doctrine. And, as with the teaching on artificial birth control, virtually all other denominations have compromised on this teaching.

Fortunately, because God has given his Church, the Catholic Church, his promised protection from error, those who desire to be saved can find within it, the true teaching always remaining pure and without any defilement. Yes, even under the strong pressure of today’s fashionable thinking adopted even by many of its children, it continues to teach the same “*hard sayings*” (see John 6:61), as it must. For, the Bible teaches:

obey: “What God has joined together let no man put asunder” (Ambrose of Milan, Commentary on Luke, 8:5 [A.D. 389]).

Wherever there is fornication and a suspicion of fornication a wife is freely dismissed. Because it is always possible that someone may calumniate the innocent and, for the sake of a second joining in marriage, act in criminal fashion against the first, it is commanded that when the first wife is dismissed a second may not be taken while the first lives (Jerome, Commentaries on Matthew, 3:19:9 [A.D. 398]).

Neither can it rightly be held that a husband who dismisses his wife because of fornication and marries another does not commit adultery. For, there is also adultery on the part of those who, after the repudiation of their former wives because of fornication, marry others. This adultery, nevertheless, is certainly less serious than that of men who dismiss their wives for reasons other than fornication and take other wives. Therefore, when we say; “Whoever marries a woman dismissed by her husband for reason other than fornication commits adultery,” undoubtedly we speak the truth. But we do not thereby acquit of this crime the man who marries a woman who was dismissed because of fornication. We do not doubt in the least that both are adulterers (Augustine, Adulterous Marriages, 1:9:9 [A.D. 419]).

As a further aside, there are marriages that are found to have been invalid from the day they were entered into (*i.e.* it is found that one of the parties was previously married). These are not true marriages and can be declared *null* (which is completely different than *divorce*) by the authority of the Church. In such case, either party that has no impediment remains free to marry because they were never married to begin with.

Preach the word: be instant [i.e. constant] in season, out of season: reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine. For there shall be a time, when they will not endure sound doctrine; but, according to their own desires, they will heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears: And will indeed turn away their hearing from the truth, but will be turned unto fables (2Timothy 4:2-4).

In this passage we see how seriously the Bible warns us against false doctrines. Unfortunately, we are living in times when this prophecy has never been more thoroughly fulfilled. There tens of thousands of “churches” which call themselves “Christian” all of which differ in their doctrine. Yet Jesus stated He was founding his “*Church*,” not “*churches*,” in his solemn declaration to St. Peter. And against that Church *alone* did He promise the gates of hell would not prevail (Matthew 16:18).

Christ’s Church has a God-given Authority, the Others Do Not

The Son of God, Jesus Christ, did not found these various false “churches.” Rather, ordinary fallible men established them who had no more authority to do so than you or I. On the other hand, St. Peter, the first head of the Church, received his authority over the Church directly from Jesus Himself who declared that God in Heaven would ratify his decisions: “*I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven*” (Matthew 16:19).

Those who have ruled Christ’s Church since then have received their authority through an unbroken line of succession — after Peter came Linus, then Cletus, then Clement and so on down to the present day Pope (at this writing Benedict XVI). Thus, those in authority over the Catholic Church have always had a God-given right to rule the Church. The separated “churches” have no such claim.

The Bible Warns against Private Interpretation

Unfortunately, most of the members of these false “churches” (and here I specifically mean the various Protestant sects) believe that all that they need is the Bible. Much more about why this cannot possibly be true will be discussed in the second part of this booklet, **The Church or the Bible**. But for now let us consider simply this: Those who belong to these false churches believe that they can read the Holy Bible, determine for themselves what it means, and by following their own interpretation, be saved. But, as we find, the Bible itself teaches against this. In speaking of St. Paul’s Epistles we find:

...in all his [St. Paul's] epistles...are certain things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, to their own destruction. You therefore, brethren, knowing these things before, take heed, lest being led aside by the error of the unwise, you fall from your own steadfastness (2 Peter 3:16-17).

Those who are “unlearned” and those who are “unstable” are all those who have not learned and understood that there is one authorized interpreter of the Holy Bible and that that is the Catholic Church. For, as I have shown, she is the “*pillar and ground of truth*” against which, according to the guarantee of Christ, “*the gates of hell shall not prevail.*” Therefore, in all her formal teachings, we are assured we will always receive the truth. On the other hand, there is no guarantee that anyone else’s interpretation of the Bible will be the true one.* For, again we read:

...no prophecy of scripture is made by private interpretation. For prophecy came not by the will of man at any time: but the holy men of God spoke, inspired by the Holy Ghost.

And, continuing in this same passage, we are warned:

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there shall be among you lying teachers, who shall bring in sects of perdition, and deny the Lord who bought them: bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their riotousnesses, through whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of (2 Peter 1:20-2:2).

Today, how many have followed the “*lying teachers*” such as Martin Luther and John Calvin who began the first of the many false (Protestant) “churches.” These so-called “churches,” we must clearly state, are these “*sects of perdition*” against which we have been warned! And it is in these false “churches” that so often the Catholic Church — the “*way of truth*” — is “*evil spoken of.*”

Please understand that it is not my intent to offend any readers who may belong to any of these sects. Rather, in charity, I wish to kindly state the truth clearly, even at the risk of offending, that “*you may know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*” (John 8:32).

Going back to the Bible, we have found that the Bible was inspired by the Holy Ghost. Thus only the Holy Ghost can give us its true meaning. Jesus Christ gave the Holy Ghost to the Apostles of his Church at Pentecost. For, Jesus told the Apostles at the Last Supper:

* We have used the Catholic Church’s traditional interpretation in our utilization of Scripture passages for this booklet.

And I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you for ever. The spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, nor knoweth him: but you shall know him; because he shall abide with you, and shall be in you. (...) These things have I spoken to you, abiding with you. But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you (John 14:16-17, 26).

The Power and Authority of the Apostles Passed On

Logically, what Jesus promised St. Peter and to the Apostles, He likewise promised to their successors to the end of time:

And Jesus coming, spoke to them, saying: All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Going therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world (Matthew 28:18-20).

From this passage it is clear that the mission Jesus gave his Apostles of preaching to the nations, baptizing the converts and teaching them obedience to all God's commands was to continue even after the death of all the Apostles. Thus the Apostles, through "*the imposition of hands*," passed on the authority and power that they had received directly from Christ to other men who were to succeed them. This process, which started with the Apostles, has continued in an unbroken chain down to our very day. The following passages illustrate this transition of authority and powers:

For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and shouldest ordain priests in every city, as I also appointed thee (Titus 1:5).

Neglect not the grace that is in thee, which was given thee by prophesy, with imposition of the hands of the priesthood (1Timothy 4:14).

For I have not spared to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed to yourselves, and to the whole flock, wherein the Holy Ghost hath placed you bishops, to rule the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. I know that, after my departure, ravening wolves will enter in among you, not sparing the flock. And of your own selves shall arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them (Acts of the Apostles 20:27-30).

The Necessity of Remaining in Christ's Church for Salvation

Here, in this final quotation, we see the Apostle warning the bishops (as he also warned in other places) that false teachers would come to draw members of the flock away from the path of truth with their false doctrine. Therefore, in every age it is necessary to remain united to the Catholic Church founded by Jesus Christ against which He promised the *"the gates of hell shall not prevail."* For, again, it remains always *"the pillar and ground of truth."*

Being that the Catholic Church is the one true Church and that she alone teaches the way of salvation, it is necessary for all those who wish to be saved to listen to her. For whoever listens to her, listens to Jesus Christ, as He Himself said: *"He who hears you hears me."* Furthermore, whoever will not listen to her, makes Jesus his enemy; for He went on to say: *"...and he that despises you despises me"* (Luke 10:16). Finally, Jesus also stated that if anyone *"will not hear the church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican"* (Matthew 18:17). Thus we can clearly see that it is necessary to listen to and heed the Church to be assured of salvation.

The Catholic Church is NOT a Mere Human Institution

Many today state that they do not believe in organized religion; yet as we have seen, Jesus Christ Himself gave all humanity a true organized religion by which all are to be saved. This religion, however, is not an ordinary human institution. Rather, just like Jesus Christ, it possesses both a human and a divine nature. In its human nature, it is made up of sinful human members. As individuals, these human members are quite fallible and even capable of great evil. Sadly, history bears witness to churchmen who have fallen scandalously short of their high calling. Fortunately, however, in its divine nature, the Church is perfect. Its soul, the Holy Ghost, keeps it pure in its unity of doctrine of faith and morals. The Holy Ghost also supplies graces of holiness which continually sanctify those members who correspond to those graces. The witness given by the heroic virtue of the Church's virtually countless Saints and Martyrs throughout its 2,000-year history gives ample testimony to this.

Thus, as her members have recited in her Creed from Apostolic times, we *"believe in the holy Catholic Church."** Yes, those who have *found the true faith*, believe, not only in Jesus Christ, but in the Church Jesus has founded. For, the Roman Catholic Church is not a human, but a

* From *The Apostles' Creed*.

divine institution directly willed by God as the one and only means of salvation for all mankind.

The Way of Salvation

Having shown that the Catholic Religion alone teaches the true Faith, you may now wish to know what the Catholic Church teaches about what God has revealed as the means to get to Heaven. So, here *briefly*, is the Church's unvarying teaching on the way of salvation:

Man Created by God with Wonderful Gifts

God created Adam, the first man, in a state of perfect happiness. He lived in the Garden of Eden where he and his companion Eve enjoyed what are called the *preternatural* gifts: infused knowledge, and freedom from sickness, suffering, death, and concupiscence (the tendency to sin). However, the Church also teaches that they were given another, greater gift, the *supernatural* gift of **Sanctifying Grace** which made them children of God and gave them a *right to Heaven*. God tested Adam's fidelity by giving him a command. Adam sinned by disobeying, and in doing so he lost all these gifts. Then, being the head of the human race, he lost them not only for himself, but also for all his descendents (*i.e.* the entire human race). Therefore, every child of Adam comes into this world deprived of all these wonderful gifts, including **Sanctifying Grace**, which it is *necessary to possess* in order to enter into Heaven.

Man Redeemed by Jesus Christ Who Opens the Way to Heaven

Fortunately, God mercifully sent his Son, Jesus (miraculously born of the Virgin Mary), into the world to suffer and die for us, which opened the way to Heaven again. Three days later He, Jesus, arose from the dead proving He was, indeed, God. His suffering and death were offered to the Father in Heaven to pay for our sins — the Original Sin of Adam (which we all inherit) and each of our personal sins. One of the gifts that Our Saviour Jesus obtained for the Church through his suffering and death is the Sacrament of Baptism. Baptism washes away Original Sin and all our personal sins and restores **Sanctifying Grace** (which is our "passport to Heaven") making us adopted children of God. Therefore, through Baptism, we regain our *right to Heaven*.

Losing and Regaining the Gift of Sanctifying Grace

But we can again lose this "passport to Heaven." **Sanctifying Grace** is lost by committing just one *mortal* sin. For, mortal sin is a deliberate

decision to violate God's law in some serious matter. Since God ordained that we may be baptized only once, further help is needed for those who have the misfortune of losing **Sanctifying Grace** by falling into mortal sin. Fortunately, Our Saviour Jesus also obtained for the Church the gift of the Sacrament of Penance or Confession. By making a *worthy* confession to a Catholic priest, our sins are forgiven, **Sanctifying Grace** is restored, and thus we regain our right to Heaven.* Jesus gave the Church the Sacrament of Penance when He first appeared to his Apostles after rising from the dead and said:

“As the Father hath sent me, I also send you.” When he had said this, he breathed on them; and he said to them: “Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained” (John 20:21-23).

The Importance of Remaining in Sanctifying Grace

As Scripture teaches, you must die one day, and immediately after you will be judged (Hebrews 9:27). As you have seen, if you die without **Sanctifying Grace**, without your “passport to Heaven,” you cannot go to Heaven; rather, you will go to Hell for all eternity. If you die possessing **Sanctifying Grace** — which your God and Savior Jesus died in humiliation and torments to give to you — since you have your passport, you are guaranteed to go to Heaven for all eternity.

Therefore, what is of key importance for a happy judgment and thus a happy eternity is to possess **Sanctifying Grace** at the moment of death. Since death can come upon us any time *“as a thief in the night”* (1Thes. 5:2), and since *“of that day or the hour no man knoweth”* (Mark. 13:32), if we are wise, we will strive to remain habitually in the possession of **Sanctifying Grace**. The best way to do this is by striving to love God above all things as Jesus commanded (Mark 12:31). This means we must keep the Commandments of God and the Church, develop a healthy relationship with God through regular prayer, do penance, practice charity and strive to grow in the Christian virtues. Frequently receiving the Holy Sacraments with proper dispositions is also *indispensable*.

* Priests, bishops and even the Pope are, like the rest of us, children of Adam and prone to sin. Thus the reader may be interested to learn that they too are obliged to confess their sins. Church law demands that they do so with greater frequency than is obligatory for the laity.

To Find Out More about the Catholic Church

I hope that what you have read here has stirred your interest in the Catholic Faith. If so, please see the *inside back cover* for information on where you can learn more. I also invite you to read the second half of this booklet containing a sermon by Fr. Arnold Damen in which he clearly shows why the Bible cannot stand on its own as the sole rule of the Christian Faith.

The Church or the Bible

The One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church

By Fr. Arnold Damen, S.J.

(Taken from the second part of the booklet, *The One True Church*. Available from **Our Lady of the Rosary Library** — 11721 Hidden Creek Road — Prospect, KY 40059. Copies are 50¢ each. www.olrl.org.)

Introduction

The following sermon is as relevant today as it was over 100 years ago when it was first preached by Father Arnold Damen, S.J. That Father Damen's message was and still is a challenge to the many who pride themselves "Bible-and-Bible-alone Christians" is evident from the title, "The Church or the Bible."

"One cannot have God for his Father, who will not have the Church for his Mother," and likewise one cannot have the Word of God for his faith who will not have the Church for his teacher. It is the infallible teaching authority of the Church, as promised by Christ, which alone preserves God's word from erroneous interpretation. This is the essence of the zealous priest's doctrine. It is also the essence of true Christianity, as Father Damen amply proves from Scripture itself and from just plain common sense.

Every sincere Bible reader deserves to know the true relation God has established between His Church and Holy Scripture. We, therefore, invite all who love the Bible to read Father Damen's exposition with an open mind, lest while reading the Scriptures "*they wrest them to their own destruction*" (2 Peter 3:16).

I.

Dearly Beloved Christians: — When Our Divine Savior sent His Apostles and His Disciples throughout the whole universe to preach the Gospel to every creature, He laid down the conditions of salvation thus:

"He that believeth and is Baptized," said the Son of the Living God, *"shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned"* (Mark 16:16). Here, then, Our Blessed Lord laid down the two conditions of salvation: Faith and Baptism. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be condemned — or is damned. Hence, then, two conditions of salvation: Faith and Baptism. I will speak this evening on the condition of Faith.

We must have Faith in order to be saved, and we must have Divine Faith, not human faith. Human faith will not save a man, but only Divine Faith. What is Divine Faith? It is to believe, upon the authority of God, all the Truths that God has revealed; that is Divine Faith. To believe all that God has taught upon the authority of God, and to believe without doubting, without hesitating; for the moment you commence to doubt or hesitate; that moment you commence to distrust the authority of God, and, therefore, insult God by doubting His Word. Divine Faith, therefore, is to believe without doubting, without hesitating. Human faith is when we believe a thing upon the authority of men — on human authority. That is human Faith. But Divine Faith is to believe without hesitating, whatsoever God has revealed upon the authority of God, upon the Word of God.

Therefore, my dear people, it is not a matter of indifference what religion a man professes, providing he be a good man.

You hear it said nowadays in this Nineteenth Century of little faith that it matters not what religion a man professes, providing he be a good man. That is heresy, my dear people, and I will prove it to you to be such. If it be a matter of indifference what a man believes, providing he be a good man, why then it is useless for God to make any revelation whatever. If a man is at liberty to reject what God revealeth, what use for Christ to send out His Apostles and disciples to teach all nations, if those nations are at liberty to believe or reject the teachings of the Apostles or disciples? You see at once that this would be insulting God.

If God reveals a thing or teaches a thing, He means to be believed. He wants to be believed whenever He teaches or reveals a thing. Man is bound to believe whatsoever God has revealed, for, my dear people, we are bound to worship God, both with our reason and intellect, as well as with our heart and will. God is master of the whole man. He claims his will, his heart, his reason, and his intellect.

Where is the man in his reason, no matter what denomination, church, or religion he belongs to, that will deny that we are bound to believe what God has taught? I am sure there is not a Christian who will

deny that we are bound to believe whatsoever God has revealed. Therefore, it is not a matter of indifference what religion a man professes. He must profess that true religion if he would be saved.

But what is the true religion? To believe all that God has taught. I am sure that even my Protestant friends will admit this is right; for, if they do not, I would say they are no Christians at all.

“But what is the true Faith?”

“The true Faith,” say Protestant friends, *“is to believe in the Lord Jesus.”*

Agreed, Christians believe in that. Tell me what you mean by believing in the Lord Jesus?

“Why you must believe that he is the Son of the Living God.”

Agreed again. Thanks be to God, we can agree on something. We believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of the Living God, that He is God. To this we all agree, excepting the Unitarians and Socinians, but we will leave them alone tonight. If Christ be God, then we must believe all He teaches. Is this not so, my dearly beloved Protestant brethren and sisters? And that’s the right Faith, isn’t it?

“Well, yes,” says my Protestant friend, *“I guess that is the right Faith. To believe that Jesus is the Son of the Living God we must believe all that Christ has taught.”*

We Catholics say the same, and here we agree again. Christ, then, we must believe, We must believe all that Christ has taught—that God has revealed—and, without that Faith there is no salvation; without that Faith there is no hope of Heaven; without that Faith there is eternal damnation! We have the words of Christ for it: *“He that believeth not shall be condemned,”* says Christ.

II.

But if Christ, my dearly beloved people, commands me under pain of eternal damnation to believe all that He has taught, He must give me the means to know what He has taught.

If, therefore, Christ commands me upon pain of eternal damnation, He is bound to give me the means of knowing what He has taught. And the means Christ gives us of knowing this must have been at all times within the reach of all people.

Secondly, the means that God gives us to know what He has taught must be a means adapted to the capacities of all intellects — even the dullest.

For even those of the dullest of understandings have a right to salvation, and consequently they have a right to the means whereby they shall learn the truths that God has taught, that they may believe them and be saved.

The means that God gives us to know what he has taught must be an infallible means. For if it be a means that can lead us astray, it can be no means at all. It must be an infallible means, so that if a man makes use of that means, he will infallibly, without fear of mistake or error, be brought to a knowledge of all the truths that God has taught.

I don't think there can be anyone present here — I care not what he is, a Christian or an unbeliever — who can object to my premises. And these premises are the groundwork of my discourse and of all my reasoning, and therefore, I want you to bear them in mind. I will repeat them, for on these premises rests all the strength of my discourse and reasoning.

If God commands me under pain of eternal damnation to believe all that He has taught, He is bound to give me the means to know what He has taught. And the means that God gives me must have been at all times within the reach of all people- must be adapted to the capacities of all intellects, must be an infallible means to us, so that if a man makes use of it he will be brought to a knowledge of all the truths that God has taught.

III.

Has God given us such means? "Yes," say my Protestant friends, "*He has.*" And so says the Catholic: God has given us such a means. What is the means God has given us whereby we shall learn the Truth that God has revealed? "*The Bible,*" say my Protestant friends, "*the Bible, the whole of the Bible, and nothing but the Bible.*" But we Catholics say, "*No; not the Bible and its private interpretation, but the Church of the Living God.*"

I will prove the facts, and I defy all my separated brethren — and all the preachers into the bargain — to disprove what I will say tonight. I say, then, it is not the private interpretation of the Bible that has been appointed by God to be the teacher of man, but the Church of the living God.

For, my dear people, if God has intended that man should learn His (God's) religion from a book — the Bible — surely God would have given that book to man; Christ would have given that book to man. Did He do it? He did not. Christ sent His Apostles throughout the whole universe and said: "*Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*"

Christ did not say, *“Sit down and write Bibles and scatter them over the earth, and let every man read his Bible and judge for himself.”* If Christ had said that, there would never have been a Christianity on the earth at all, but a Babylon and confusion instead, and never one Church, the union of one body. Hence, Christ never said to His Apostles, *“Go and write Bibles and distribute them, and let everyone judge for himself.”* That injunction was reserved for the Sixteenth Century, and we have seen the result of it. Ever since the Sixteenth Century there has been springing up religion upon religion, and churches upon churches, all fighting and quarreling with one another. And all because of private interpretation of the Bible.

Christ sent His Apostles with the authority to teach all nations, and never gave them any command of writing the Bible. And the Apostles went forth and preached everywhere, and planted the Church of God throughout the earth, but never thought of writing.

The first word written was by St. Matthew (a Catholic), and he wrote for the benefit of a few individuals. He wrote the Gospel about seven years after Christ left this earth, so that the Church of God, established by Christ, existed seven years before a line was written of the New Testament.

St. Mark (also a Catholic) wrote about ten years after Christ left this earth; St. Luke (another Catholic) about twenty-five years, and St. John (still another Catholic) about sixty-three years after Christ had established the Church of God. St. John wrote the last portion of the Bible — the Book of the Apocalypse (or Revelation as the Protestants call it) — about sixty-five years after Christ had left this earth and the Church of God had been established. The Catholic religion had existed sixty-five years before the Bible was completed, before it was written.

Now, I ask you, my dearly beloved separated brethren, were these Christian people, who lived during the period between the establishment of the Church of Jesus and the finishing of the Bible, were they really Christians, good Christians, enlightened Christians? Did they know the religion of Jesus? Where is the man that will dare to say that those who lived from the time that Christ went up to Heaven to the time that the Bible was completed were not Christians? It is admitted on all sides, by all denominations, that they were the very best of Christians, the first fruit of the Blood of Jesus Christ.

But how did they know what they had to do to save their souls? Was it from the Bible that they learned it? No, because the Bible had yet to be written. And would our Divine Savior have left His Church for sixty-five years without a teacher of man? Most assuredly not.

Were the Apostles Christians, I ask you, my dear Protestant friends? You say, "*Yes, sir; they were the very founders of Christianity.*" Now, my dear friends, none of the Apostles ever read the Bible; not one of them except, perhaps, Saint John. For all of them had died martyrs for the Faith of Jesus Christ and never saw the cover of a Bible. Every one of them died martyrs and heroes for the Church of Jesus before the Bible was completed.

How, then, did those Christians that lived in the first sixty-five years after Christ ascended — how did they know what they had to do to save their souls? They knew it precisely the same way that you know it, my dear Catholic friends. You know it from the teaching of the Church of God, and so did the primitive Christians know it.

IV.

Not only sixty-five years did Christ leave the Church He had established without a Bible, but over three hundred years. The Church of God was established and went on spreading itself over the whole globe without a Bible for more than three hundred years. In all that time the people did not know what constituted the Bible.

In the days of the Apostles there were many false gospels. There was the Gospel of Simon, the Gospel of Nicodemus, of Mary, of Barnabas, and the Gospel of the infancy of Jesus. All of these gospels were spread among the people, and the people did not know which of these were inspired and which were false and spurious. Even the learned themselves were disputing whether preference should be given to the Gospel of Simon or that of Matthew — to the Gospel of Nicodemus or the Gospel of Mark, the Gospel of Mary or that of Luke, the Gospel of the Infancy of Jesus or the Gospel of St. John the Evangelist.

And so it was in regard to the epistles: Many spurious epistles were written, and the people were at a loss for over three hundred years to know which was false or spurious, or which inspired. And, therefore, they did not know what constituted the books of the Bible.

It was not until the Fourth Century that the Pope of Rome, the Head of the Church, the successor of Saint Peter, assembled together the Bishops of the world in a council. And there in that council it was decided that the Bible, as we Catholics now have it, is the Word of God, and that the Gospels of Simon, Nicodemus, Mary, the Infancy of Jesus, and Barnabas, and all those other epistles were spurious or, at least, un-authentic; at least, that there was no evidence of their inspiration, and that the Gospels of Saints Luke, Matthew, Mark and John, and the Book of the Apocalypse (Revelation), were inspired by the Holy Ghost.

Up to that time the whole world for three hundred years did not know what the Bible was (*Note: The Catholics at that time did know about the Old Testament, but there was no New Testament in existence — Editor*); hence, they could not take the Bible for their guide, for they did not know what constituted the Bible. Would our Divine Savior, if He intended man to learn his religion from a book, have left the Christian world for three hundred years without that book? Most assuredly not.

V.

Not only for three hundred years was the world left without the Bible, but for one thousand four hundred years the Christian world was left without the Sacred Book.

Before the art of printing was invented, Bibles were rare things; Bibles were costly things. Now, you must all be aware, if you have read history at all, that the art of printing was invented only a little more than four hundred years ago (*Note: Four hundred years as of this writing; late 19th Century*) — about the middle of the Fifteenth Century — and about one hundred years before there was a single Protestant in the world.

As I have said, before printing was invented books were rare and costly things. Historians tell us that in the Eleventh Century — eight hundred years ago — Bibles were so rare and costly that it took a fortune, a considerable fortune, to buy oneself a copy of the Bible! Before the art of printing, everything had to be done with the pen upon parchment or sheepskin. It was, therefore, a tedious and slow operation — a costly operation.

Now, in order to arrive at the probably cost of a Bible at that time, let us suppose that a man should work ten years to make a copy of the Bible and earn a dollar a day. Well, then, the cost of that Bible would be nearly \$3,650! Now, let us suppose that a man should work at the copying of the Bible for twenty years, as historians say it would have taken him that long, not having the conveniences and improvements to aid him that we have now. Then, at a dollar a day, for twenty years, the cost of a Bible would be nearly \$8,000 (*And this was calculated in the 19th Century, long before the inflationary prices of today which would make the price several times more! — Editor*).

Suppose I came and said to you, “*My dear people, save your soul, for if you lose your soul all is lost.*” You would ask, “*What are we to do to save your souls?*” The Protestant preacher would say to you, “*You must get a Bible; you can get one at such-and-such a shop.*” You would ask the cost, and be told it was \$8,000. You would exclaim: “*The Lord save us! And can we not go to Heaven without that book?*” The answer would

be: *"No, you must have the Bible and read it."* You murmur at the price, but are asked, *"is not your soul worth \$8,000?"* Yes, of course it is, but you say you do not have the money, and if you cannot get a Bible, and our salvation depends upon it, evidently you would have to remain outside the Kingdom of Heaven. This would be a hopeless condition, indeed.

For fourteen hundred years the world was left without a Bible — not one in ten thousand, not one in twenty thousand, before the art of printing was invented, had the Bible. And would our Divine Lord have left the world without that book if it was necessary to man's salvation? Most assuredly not.

VI.

But let us suppose for a moment that all had Bibles, that Bibles were written from the beginning, and that every man, woman, and child had a copy. What good would that book be to people who did not know how to read it? It is a blind thing to such persons.

Even now one-half the inhabitants of the earth cannot read. Moreover, as the Bible was written in Greek and Hebrew, it would be necessary to know these languages in order to be able to read it.

But it is said that we have a translation now in French, English, and other languages of the day. Yes, but are you sure you have a faithful translation? If not, you have not the Word of God. If you have a false translation, it is the work of man. How shall you ascertain that? How shall you find out if you have a faithful translation from the Greek and Hebrew? *"I do not know Greek or Hebrew,"* says my separated friend; *"for my translation I must depend upon the opinion of the learned."*

Well, then, dear friends, suppose the learned should be divided in their opinions, and some of them should say it is good, and some false? Then your faith is gone; you must commence doubting and hesitating, because you do not know if the translation is good.

Now with regard to the Protestant translation of the Bible, allow me to tell you that the most learned among Protestants tell you that your translation—the King James edition—is a very faulty translation and is full of errors. Your own learned divines, preachers, and bishops have written whole volumes to point out all the errors that are there in the King James translation, and Protestants of various denominations acknowledge it.

Some years ago, when I lived in St. Louis, there was held in that city a convention of ministers. All denominations were invited, the object being to arrange for a new translation of the Bible, and give it to the

world. The proceedings of the convention were published daily in the Missouri Republican. A very learned Presbyterian, I think it was, stood up, and, urging the necessity of giving a new translation of the Bible, said that in the present Protestant translation of the Bible there were no less than thirty thousand errors.

And you say, my dear Protestant friends, that the Bible is your guide and teacher. What a teacher, with thirty thousand errors! The Lord save us from such a teacher! One error is bad enough, but thirty thousand is a little too much.

Another preacher stood up in the convention — I think he was a Baptist — and, urging the necessity of giving a new translation of the Bible, said for thirty years past the world was without the word of God, for the Bible we have is not the Word of God at all.

Here are your own preachers for you. You all read the newspapers, no doubt, my friends, and must know what happened in England a few years ago. A petition was sent to parliament for an allowance of a few thousand pounds sterling for the purpose of getting up a new translation of the Bible. And that movement was headed and carried on by Protestant bishops and clergymen.

VII.

But, my dear people, how can you be sure of your faith? You say the Bible is your guide, but you do not know if you have it. Let us suppose for a moment that all should have a Bible. Should all read it and have a faithful translation, even then it cannot be the guide of man, because the private interpretation of the Bible is not infallible, but, on the contrary, most fallible. It is the source and fountain of all kinds of errors and heresies, and all kinds of blasphemous doctrines. Do not be shocked, my dear friends; just be calm and listen to my arguments.

There are now throughout the world three hundred and fifty different denominations or churches [in Fr. Damen's time — over 30,000 now], and all of them say the Bible is their guide and teacher. And we'll suppose they are all sincere. Are all of them true churches? This is an impossibility. Truth is one as God is one, and there can be no contradiction. Every man in his senses sees that every one of them cannot be true, for they differ and contradict one another, and cannot, therefore, be all true. The Protestants say the man that reads the Bible right and prayerfully has Truth, and they all say that they read it right.

Let us suppose that here is an Episcopalian minister. He is (just for the sake of argument) a sincere, an honest, a well-meaning and prayerful man. He reads his Bible in a prayerful spirit, and from the Word of the Bible, he says it is clear that there must be bishops. For without bishops there can be no priests, without priests no Sacraments, and without Sacraments no Church. The Presbyterian is a sincere and well meaning man. He reads the Bible also, and deduces that there should be no bishops, but only presbyters. *"Here is the Bible,"* says the Episcopalian; and *"here is the Bible to give you a lie,"* says the Presbyterian. Yet both of them are prayerful and well-meaning men.

Then the Baptist comes in. He is (again for the sake of argument) a well-meaning, honest man, and prayerful also. *"Well,"* says the Baptist, *"have you ever been baptized?"* *"I was,"* says the Episcopalian, *"when I was a baby."* *"And so was I,"* says the Presbyterian, *"when I was a baby."* *"But,"* says the Baptist, *"you are going to Hell as sure as you live."*

Next comes the Unitarian, (presumably) well-meaning, honest, and sincere. *"Well,"* says the Unitarian, *"allow me to tell you that you are a pack of idolaters. You worship a man for a God who is no God at all."* And he gives several texts from the Bible to prove it, while the others are stopping their ears that they may not hear the blasphemies of the Unitarian. And they all contend that they have the true meaning of the Bible.

Next comes the Methodist, and he says, *"My friends, have you got any religion at all?"* *"Of course we have,"* they say. *"Did you ever feel religion,"* says the Methodist, *"the Spirit of God moving within you?"* *"Nonsense,"* says the Presbyterian, *"we are guided by our reason and judgment."* *"Well,"* says the Methodist, *"if you have never felt religion, you never had it, and will go to Hell for eternity."*

The Universalist next comes in, and hears them threatening one another with eternal hellfire. *"Why,"* says he, *"you are a strange set of people. Do you not understand the Word of God? There is no Hell at all. That idea is good enough to scare old women and children,"* and he proves it from the Bible.

Now comes in the Quaker. He urges them not to quarrel, and advises that they do not baptize at all. He is the sincerest of men (not really, but for argument's sake), and gives the Bible for his faith.

Another comes in and says: *"Baptize the men and let the women alone. For the Bible says, 'unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven.' So,"* says he, *"the women are all right, but baptize the men."*

Next comes in the Shaker, and says he: "*You are a presumptuous people. Do you not know that the Bible tells you that you must work out your salvation in fear and trembling, and you do not tremble at all. My brethren, if you want to go to heaven shake, brother, shake!*"

VIII.

I have brought together seven or eight denominations, differing one from another, or understanding the Bible in different ways, illustrative of the fruits of private interpretation. What, then, if I brought together the three hundred and fifty different denominations, all taking the Bible for their guide and teaching, and all differing from one another? Are they all right? One says there is a Hell, and another says there is no Hell. Are both right? One says Christ is God; another says He is not. One says they are unessential. One says Baptism is requisite, and another says it is not. Are both true? This is an impossibility, my dear friends; all cannot be true.

Who, then, is true? He that has the true meaning of the Bible, you say. But the Bible does not tell us who that is — the Bible never settles the quarrel. It is not the teacher.

The Bible, my dear people, is a good book. We Catholics allow that the Bible is the Word of God, the language of inspiration, and every Catholic is exhorted to read the Bible. But good as it is, the Bible, my dear friends, does not explain itself. It is a good book, the Word of God, the language of inspiration. Your understanding of the Bible is not inspired — for surely you do not pretend to be inspired!

Now, then, what is the teaching of the Church on the subject? The Catholic Church says the Bible is the Word of God, and that God has appointed an authority to give us the true meaning.

It is with the Bible as it is with the Constitution of the United States. When Washington and his associates established the Constitution and the Supreme law of the United States, they did not say to the people of the States: "*Let every man read the Constitution and make a government unto himself; let every man make his own explanation of the Constitution.*" If Washington had done that, there never would have been a United States. The people would all have been divided among themselves, and the country would have been cut up into a thousand different divisions or governments.

What did Washington do? He gave the people the Constitution and the Supreme Law, and appointed his Supreme Court and Supreme Judge of the Constitution. And these are to give the true explanation of the Constitution to all the citizens of America — all without exception, from the President to the beggar. All are bound to go by the decisions of the Supreme Court, and

it is this and this alone that can keep the people together and preserve the union of the United States. The moment the people take the interpretation of the Constitution into their own hands, that moment there is an end of union.

And so it is in every government — so it is here and everywhere. There is a Constitution, a Supreme Court or Law, a Supreme Judge of that Constitution, and that Supreme Court is to give us the meaning of the Constitution and the Law.

In every well-ruled country there must be such a thing as this — a Supreme Law, Supreme Court, Supreme Judge, that all the people abide by. There is in every country a Supreme Law, Supreme Court, Supreme Judge; and all are bound by decisions, and without that no government could stand. *“A house divided against itself cannot stand.”* Even among the Indian tribes such a condition of affairs exists. How are they kept together? By their chief, who is their dictator.

So our Divine Savior also has established His Supreme Court — His Supreme Judge — to give us the true meaning of the Scriptures, and to give us the true revelation and doctrines of the Word of Jesus. The Son of the Living God has pledged His Word that this Supreme Court is infallible, and, therefore, the true Catholic never doubts.

“I believe,” says the Catholic, *“because the Church teaches me so. I believe the Church because God has commanded me to believe her. He said: ‘Hear the Church, and he that does not hear the Church let him be to thee as a heathen and a publican.’ ‘He that heareth you heareth Me,’ said Christ, ‘and he that despiseth you despiseth Me.’”* Therefore, the Catholic believes because God has spoken, and upon the authority of God.

But our Protestant friends say, *“We believe in the Bible.”* Very well; how do you understand the Bible? *“Well,”* says the Protestant, *“to the best of my opinion and judgment this is the meaning of the text.”* He is not sure of it, but to the best of his opinion and judgment. This, my friends, is only the testimony of a man — it is only human faith, not Divine Faith.

It is Divine Faith alone by which we give honor and glory to God, by which we adore His infinite wisdom and veracity, and that adoration and worship is necessary for salvation.

I have now proved to you that the private interpretation of the Scripture cannot be the guide or teacher of man.



About Fr. Damen, S.J.

Father Arnold Damen was born in the province of North Brabant, Holland, on March 20, 1815. He was admitted to the Society of Jesus, November 21, 1837, and was one of the band of young novices brought over to this country by Father De Smet, renowned Jesuit missionary to the American Indians. In his illustrious career, which spanned some fifty years of apostolic work before his death on January 1, 1890, Father Damen and his companions conducted missions in nearly every principal city of the United States. He is said to have been more widely known in this country, and at one time to have exercised personally a greater influence than any bishop or priest in the Catholic Church. Little wonder, for his majestic presence and force of eloquence, Father Damen as a missionary rose to a success that surpassed anything ever before or since known in America.

The fiery apostolic zeal of this beloved and pious priest can only scarcely be measured by the twelve thousand conversions to Catholicism for which he was responsible, often receiving as many as sixty or seventy souls into the Church in one day. For it must be noted, too, that in the midst of all this remarkable labor, he also managed to found and to organize the great Jesuit institutions of Chicago that stand today as monuments to his holy memory. What explains the inspiring achievements of Father Damen? As one writer expressed it: "He cared nothing for applause or criticism. He was working to save souls." In other words, his noble accomplishments were the fruits of immense charity. That is, charity in the truest sense: He loved God and his fellow man so much that he would spare no energy or effort that was necessary to wrest a soul from the spiritual error and darkness which would bring about its eternal loss. And to this saintly Jesuit, such was the certain fate always and everywhere present outside the One True Church. Father Damen preached in an age quite recent to our own, when Catholics not only still universally believed but lived by the infallibly declared, immutable constant dogma of the Faith: Outside the Church there is no salvation. This was, in fact, his whole creed and teaching, by which he effectively converted so many.

TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE CATHOLIC FAITH — from priests
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Column of (Jewish) Ann Landers

(Published in the late 1990's)

Dear Readers: Do you have any idea when your religion was founded and by whom? ... I found the following fascinating:

- *If you are a member of the Jewish faith, your religion was founded by Abraham about 4,000 years ago.*
- *If you are Hindu, your religion developed in India around 1500 B.C.*
- *If you are a Buddhist, your religion split from Hinduism, and was founded by Buddha, Prince Siddhartha Gautama of India, about 500 B.C.*
- † ***If you are Roman Catholic, Jesus Christ began your religion in the year 33.***
- *If you are Islamic, Mohammed started your religion in what is now Saudi Arabia around 600 A.D.*
- *If you are Eastern Orthodox, your sect separated from Roman Catholicism around the year 1000.*
- *If you are a Lutheran, your religion was founded by Martin Luther, an ex-monk in the Catholic Church, in 1517.*
- *If you belong to the Church of England (Anglican), your religion was founded by King Henry VIII in the year 1534 because the pope would not grant him a divorce with the right to remarry.*
- *If you are a Presbyterian, your religion was founded when John Knox brought the teachings of John Calvin to Scotland in the year 1560.*
- *If you are Unitarian, your religious group developed in Europe in the 1500s.*
- *If you are a Congregationalist, your religion branched off from Puritanism in the early 1600s in England.*
- *If you are a Baptist, you owe the tenets of your religion to John Smyth, who launched it in Amsterdam in 1607.*
- *If you are a Methodist, your religion was founded by John and Charles Wesley in England in 1744.*
- *If you are an Episcopalian, your religion was brought over from England to the American colonies and formed a separate religion founded by Samuel Seabury in 1789.*
- *If you are a Mormon (Latter-Day Saints), Joseph Smith started your church in Palmyra, New York, not Salt Lake City, which would have been my guess. The year was 1830.*
- *If you worship with the Salvation Army (yes, it's a religious group, not just an organization that collects money in kettles on Christmas and serves dinners to the homeless), your sect began with William Booth in London in 1865.*
- *If you are a Christian Scientist, you look to 1879 as the year your religion was founded by Mary Baker Eddy.*
- *If you are a Jehovah's Witness, your religion was founded by Charles Taze Russell in Pennsylvania in the 1870s.*
- *If you are Pentecostal, your religion was started in the United States in 1901.*
- *If you are an agnostic, you profess an uncertainty or a skepticism about the existence of God or a Higher Being.*
- *If you are an atheist, you do not believe in the existence of God or any other higher power. This country's best-known atheist, Madalyn Murray O'Hair, has not been seen or heard from in more than a year. According to her son, she has disappeared without a trace.*