

The BIBLE Made a CATHOLIC Out of Me

by

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“Dedicated to All who Look to the Holy Bible for Their Rule of Christian Faith”

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LAST YEAR (1955), according to the statisticians, over two million people joined the Catholic Church. The total increase in Catholic Church membership was much greater due to the high Catholic birth rate, but that was the number of converts, the number of people who either switched over from other religions or who settled on the Catholic religion after a life of religious indecision. In the U.S.A. alone the conversions exceeded one hundred thousand.

Thus last year the Catholic Church acquired more new members via the conversion route than any other church, Christian or non-Christian, acquired via all routes. Thus last year the Catholic Church acquired more new members via the conversion route than many of the world's religions have been able to acquire via all routes *during the whole of their existence*. And last year was by no means a boon year for conversions to the Catholic Church; according to the records it was a *typical year*.

Why? What prompts so many people to choose the Catholic religion? What makes the Catholic religion the world's most desirable religion?

I wish I could answer that question but I cannot. Each individual convert has his or her own particular reason for embracing the Catholic faith and I have never attempted a survey to learn what those reasons are. I could generalize, that is I could pin it down to a common denominator like "the attraction of the Church's vibrant spiritual quality," but that would be no answer; there would still be the question: What convinced the convert that such an attraction exists? or: What made the attraction irresistible?

But while I cannot answer for the millions I can answer for one – myself. You see, I too am a convert to the Catholic Church. I too found the attraction of the Catholic religion irresistible. And I would not be the least bit surprised if my reason for taking the step was the same reason that prompted many of my fellow converts. Several with whom I have discussed the subject confessed that they were similarly prompted.

My reason for embracing the Catholic faith was *the evidence of Sacred Scripture*. Yes, the title of this booklet will undoubtedly enflame the sensibilities of many Protestants and others who regard the Bible as their own private forte, but it is nevertheless true that the Bible made a Catholic out of me. It was purely and simply my unswerving devotion to the written Word of God which ultimately convinced me that the Catholic Church, or "Roman" Catholic Church if you prefer, is my true spiritual home, the church wherein I could best effect the salvation of my soul.

A glimpse into my pre-Catholic religious experience will, or should, establish that the above statement comes directly from the heart and not from the imagination. Unlike many converts I had no close association with Catholics prior to my conversion, so there was no influence, no "pressure," exerted on me from that direction. Mine was a strictly Protestant environment. I was born of Protestant parents, was baptized a Protestant, was reared a Protestant, married a Protestant and for a number of years even held down a Protestant pulpit. If ever there was a "thoroughbred" Protestant I was one.

That being my religious inheritance I naturally was an avid student of the Bible. Some of my acquaintances, thinking that I should have spent more time with other church matters, considered me too avid. I did not agree with them. Hours, days, weeks, months on end I engrossed myself in the Bible, this book which was my beloved rule of faith; for I did not relish the prospect of always being a *student* of the Bible. I earnestly desired that someday I could regard myself as an *authority* on the Bible. Indeed, how could I pose as a qualified minister of the Gospel unless I was an authority on the Bible, unless I could explain away seemingly ambiguous Biblical passages, bringing the exact and intended meaning to the fore not by surmise but by a process of clear and concise reasoning supported by affidavit? Could I appeal to an official Protestant Biblical interpreter? No, because within Protestantism there is no such court of appeal. Serious, prayerful contemplation of the Scriptures and faith in the guidance of the Holy Spirit are sufficient to resolve interpretation problems, Protestantism teaches.

This intense preoccupation with the Bible, this goal I had set for myself, led to a most gratifying discovery. I discovered that whenever I came across a seemingly ambiguous passage of Scripture, one to which several interpretations might easily be ascribed, I could

remove the ambiguity, find the one true interpretation, by searching out other passages directly bearing on the subject and correlating them. For example: in the Bible Christ repeatedly refers to himself as the "Son" of God and to God as "my Father." When these passages are isolated three distinct and contradictory interpretations can be drawn from them: (1) Jesus was a mortal being, a son of God in the same sense that all men are sons of God, (2) Jesus was a divine emissary of God, a divine being subordinate to the Supreme Being, (3) Jesus was the eternal Son of the eternal Father, the Second Person of a Triune Godhead, consubstantial and co-equal with the Father. But when those passages are correlated with Jesus' other statements bearing on His identity –John 1:18, 8:19, 10:38, 12:45 and 14:8-12, for example–the one true interpretation, namely the third one, emerges clear as crystal.

This procedure for extracting the intended truth from the whole of Sacred Scripture –employed by all of the leading authorities in Scripture exegesis, I later found out –brought a great deal of consolation to me in that I was now able to confirm in the most positive way the Christian validity of many beliefs I had previously taken for granted simply because they were traditional Protestant beliefs. But it also resulted in some startling revelations, revelations I had not bargained for, revelations which *challenged* the Christian validity of some of my beliefs. In this I was not consoled but rather very disturbed.

The first of these disturbing revelations had to do with the intrinsic structure, the true composition, of Christ's Church. Christ's true Church, the Bible revealed to me, is a body, not a composite of many individual bodies like a body of people but an organic and spiritual entity like the body of a single person. Also this body, the true Christian Church, is not strictly a human body but is akin to being a *divine* body; *this by virtue of the fact that it is the Mystical Body of Christ himself*. In a mystical but very true sense the true faithful constitute the *members* of Christ's Church body while He reigns in heaven as the Head of His church body. The following are the Bible passages that bear this out:

"Again, he is the head of his body, the Church" (Col. 1:18). "Now you are the body of Christ, member for member" (I Cor. 12:27). "We are members of his body, made from his flesh and from his bones" (Eph. 5:30).

And how did I arrive at the conclusion that Christ's church body must perforce be a unified, not a segmented, church body? I simply correlated the above texts with the following texts:

"There shall be one fold and one shepherd" (John 10:16). "And the glory that thou, Father, has given me, I have given to them, that they may be one, even as we are one" (John 17:22). "You were called in one body ... one spirit... one hope... one Lord... one faith ... one baptism" (Eph. 4:4-5).

There it was plain as could be in Sacred Scripture, *the Word of God*, that Christ's true Church was constituted as one – one in every respect: one in membership, one in belief, one in worship and one in government. That was the way Christ's Church was originally constituted and that was the way it had to remain if it was always to be identified as *His* body.

Now is it any wonder that I was disturbed by this revealed truth? *I was not a member of one Christian body*. Being a Protestant I was a member of a sort of Christian "co-op," an "association" made up of over 500 Christian bodies, each one different in name, in belief, in government and, to a lesser extent, in mode of worship. How this concept of Christ's Church could possibly be consonant with the one body, one spirit, one faith, one shepherd concept described in the Bible I could not for the life of me see.

Nor could I find any of the eminent Protestant theologians able to give me a plausible answer. Invariably they described the oneness of Christ's Church as "that fellowship which exists between all who profess Christ as Savior and preach His Gospel." *That this "fellowship" refuses to meet on common ground to profess their faith in Christ as Savior – that this "fellowship" cannot agree on what constitutes Christ's whole and true Gospel – does not enter their thinking at all. Nor does it enter their thinking that such a definition of Christ's Mystical Body appears nowhere in the Bible.*

The realization that I was not part of a real bona fide Christian unity, a single church body on the order of the single church body described in the Bible, distressed me to the very marrow of my soul. Christ's Body never was and never will be a *disjointed* body, my conscience kept repeating, and I did so want to be a member of His Body, to get my full share of the divine life which His Body imparts. "A house divided against itself cannot stand," said my Lord and Savior (*Mark 3:25*), and I did so want to rest my faith in a house that would stand; for if it would stand, impervious to time and human deceit down through the ages, it would most assuredly be God's house.

And so I did what any other Christian who sincerely believes in the Bible and who does not want to risk his salvation would do: I looked around the Christian panorama in search of that unity which Christ said would characterize His blessed faithful – and, surprise of surprises, I found it in the Catholic Church.

The discovery was not easily acknowledged. I hated to think that the religion I had been most opposed to was, in the final analysis, the religion that held out the greatest hope for me. But I had to be honest with myself. The spectacle of 475 million Catholics, three-fifths of all professed Christians, perfectly, indomitably united in belief, in organization and in authority – the historical fact that Catholics, consistently the largest body of Christians in the world, have *always* been thus perfectly united – was evidence I could not in conscience ignore. I was prejudiced but I was not blind.

Then in due course along came another Bible revelation, which shook me up still more. This time it was the conspicuous truth that Christ's Church is a *teaching* church, and where the essentials of Christian doctrine are concerned an *infallible* teaching church.

The key that opened the door of my conscience to this truth was Christ's directive to His apostles shortly before His Ascension into heaven:

"All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt. 23:18-20).

The teaching mission of the Church could not have been more clearly pronounced if Christ had devoted a great long sermon to it. And, mind you, this teaching commission was not given to all and sundry, it was given only to the apostles, to the *administrative body* of His Church. Had Christ meant that the teaching authority of His Church was to be exercised by the masses He would have addressed His words to the masses, or He would have instructed the apostles to so advise the masses, neither of which He did. The Bible is quite clear on that score. Some have been placed in the Church as teachers, but not all, wrote the Apostle Paul (*I Cor. 12:28-29*).

Now where did I get the idea that the teaching authority of Christ's Church cannot err when it defines the essentials of Christian doctrine? Where did I get the idea that the teaching authority of Christ's Church can no more err today than it could in the beginning? I got the idea from Christ and His apostles, by correlating their statements concerning the teaching authority of the Church with their statements concerning the

divine protection pledged to that teaching authority. Said Christ to the apostles:

"These things I have spoken to you while yet dwelling with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your mind whatever I have said to you . . . when the Advocate has come, whom I will send you from the Father, he will bear witness concerning me. And you also will bear witness, because from the beginning you are with me" (John 14:25-26, 15:26-27).

In other words, the teaching authority of His Church would not, could not, teach error because fallible human beings would not be doing the actual teaching; the infallible Holy Spirit of God, the infallible Christ, would be doing the actual teaching, speaking *through* the human teaching authority of the Church. Christ made this quite clear when He said to the apostles: "He who heareth you heareth me" (*Luke 10:16*).

Confirming that the teaching authority of the Church is the perennial and infallible voice of Christian truth the Apostle Paul wrote:

"I write these things to thee . . . that thou mayest know how to conduct thyself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and mainstay of truth" (1 Tim. 3:15).

Now why was I disturbed by the discovery of this Biblical truth? *Because, dear reader, I was not a member of a teaching church, much less an infallible teaching church.* The church I was affiliated with, like all other Protestant churches, took the position that Christ's Church is in no wise possessed of a visible, audible, living teaching authority. Therefore no Protestant cleric, no matter how highly placed, could pronounce, bind on the Protestant conscience, what is and is not true Christian doctrine. Not once could I who had the title of "minister of the Gospel" say to an unbeliever: "Learn of me, for you can be sure that the Gospel I teach is God's absolute truth. Learn of me, for when I teach Christian doctrine it is the Lord Jesus, who can neither deceive or be deceived, teaching through me. He who hears me hears Him." Nor could my bishop make such a declaration. Nor could the President of the World Council of Churches, or the highest official of any other Protestant alliance, make such a declaration. Any Protestant cleric who dared make such a declaration would have been accused of heresy – he would have been accused of "popery" which to a Protestant is tantamount to heresy.

The church I was a member of, like all other Protestant churches, held instead that the Bible is the only divinely authorized dispenser and guarantor of Christian truth, that if anyone would be saved he must learn from the Bible what is required of him to be saved. The sole responsibility of the Church, according to Protestant belief, is to make that known and to provide the "saved," those who profess Christ as Lord and Saviour, with a place where they can join together in "the fellowship of prayer."

This despite the fact that for the first four hundred years there was no published Christian Bible; this despite the fact that for the next one thousand years, until the invention of the printing press, there were scant few Bibles; this despite the fact that only the literate have direct access to the Bible; this despite the fact that those who have made the Bible their sole rule of faith have come up with hundreds of conflicting rules of faith; this despite the fact that the Bible itself states that many who interpret it privately will interpret it wrongly (II Peter 3:16).

Don't get me wrong, I was not beginning to doubt that the Bible is the holy Word of God. That I shall never doubt. I was simply coming to the realization that the Bible, venerable book of truth that it is, *is not the teacher of its own truth.* The obvious was forcing itself upon me: instead of being a teacher of God's truth the Bible is a *catalog* of the truths God wants taught, and taught so that all, including the blind and illiterate, can hear and

understand; *and to do this teaching, unerringly as divine truth must needs be taught, God in the Person of Jesus Christ founded a Church.* How anything so obvious could have escaped me before I do not know, unless my training had erected a mental block. It certainly is as plain as can be in the Bible.

Now my earnest desire was to find the teaching church described in the Bible; firstly because I dearly wanted to belong to the church personally founded and constituted by Christ my Lord and, secondly, because I knew that if I was taught by that church I would have His whole and pure Gospel – *I knew that my chances of eternal salvation would be increased a hundredfold.*

You guessed it, the teaching church I was looking for turned out to be the Catholic Church. A study of the histories of the various Christian churches revealed to me that only one, the Catholic Church, exercises, has continuously exercised, the kind of teaching authority which the Bible says is proper to the true Church of Jesus Christ; only the Catholic Church functions for her members as an unerring interpreter of Holy Writ, a "Supreme Court" on all questions relating to faith and morals; *only the Catholic Church dares proclaim to the world that when she teaches Christian doctrine it is Jesus Christ, who can neither deceive or be deceived, teaching through her* – only the Catholic Church gives her members this wonderful intellectual and spiritual security.

To this you may retort: "If the Catholic Church is the teaching church described in the Bible why does she suppress the Bible? Why does she bypass the Bible by drawing upon 'tradition' for some of her articles of faith?" My reply to that, dear friend, is this: Go to the Catholic Church as I went to the Catholic Church, conduct an on-the-spot investigation of the Catholic Church as I did, and you will find out as I found out that all those stories about the Catholic Church suppressing and bypassing the Bible are as false as false can be.

I realize that this is a lot to ask. Like me you have probably been taught to distrust and stay strictly away from everything that savors of "Romanism." But, believe me, you must go to the Catholic Church if you want complete and accurate knowledge of her teachings and practices. You certainly would not go to the Swiss Information Bureau for authoritative information on the winter resorts of Norway, or to General Motors for authoritative information on the performance of Ford automobiles, or to a staunch Democrat for authoritative information on the achievements and aspirations of the Republican party. Nor would you seek authoritative information about the former from the latter. It just is not fair to obtain information about someone from their rival – not fair to them and not fair to you. Why then trust a rival of the Catholic Church to give you authoritative information about her beliefs and practices?

That was the simple rule of logic and fairness I adopted and I must say that it rewarded me beyond measure. Instead of finding the Bible suppressed and bypassed in the Catholic Church I found it highly honored and conspicuously present. In fact, I had never before seen the Bible so highly honored, so conspicuously present in a church. I noticed that during Mass a large and beautiful Missal containing the Sacred Scriptures rests on the altar. The priest turns and reads this Missal frequently during the course of the Mass. At Low Mass he bends over and kisses it and at High Mass he incenses it as further signs of the Church's veneration for the Word of God. And the sermon, which almost always has a text of Scripture for its theme, is preceded by Epistle and Gospel readings. During the Gospel reading the congregation stands to show their respect for the Word of God. And what's more, I found that this profound liturgical devotion to the Scriptures has been going on since the fourth century when the Christian canon of Scripture was first determined, and determined, incidentally, by this same Catholic Church.

Are Catholics encouraged to read and meditate upon the Scriptures privately in their homes? Indeed they are. Contrary to what I had long believed I found that the Catholic

Church earnestly desires that her faithful obtain a Bible and dwell on its contents at every opportunity, and as an inducement she offers a rich grant of Indulgences to all who spend at least fifteen minutes a day thus occupied. If some Catholics ignore this plea, and I am sure some do just as some Protestants are lax in their Bible reading, it is no fault of the Church. As the saying goes: You can lead a horse to water but you cannot force him to drink. A goodly number of Catholics do respond, however, and it was only fair that I should regard them as the representative Catholics.

No, there definitely is no suppression of the Bible in the Catholic Church. All who believe otherwise have been grossly misinformed.

My on-the-spot investigation also turned up some interesting facts on the Church's reason for basing some of her articles of faith on tradition. There was nothing in these facts to indicate that the Bible was being bypassed. On the contrary, the facts established that in basing some of her articles of faith on tradition the Catholic Church is complying with the Bible. Strange that I had not noticed this before consulting the Catholic Church but the Bible does for a fact state that some of Christ's teachings were committed to tradition. Here are the Biblical texts to which I was referred:

"Stand firm, and hold the traditions you have learned, whether by word or letter of ours" (II Thess. 2:51).

"And we charge you, brethren, in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, to withdraw from every brother who lives irregularly, and not according to the traditions received from us" (II Thess. 3:6).

There is no questioning the meaning of those texts. Here the Apostle specifically states that there are not one but two criteria of Christian truth: that which was left to the Church via Sacred Scripture, via the written word, and that which was left to the Church via tradition, via the unwritten word, both of which, he says, is of equal importance to the Christian deposit of faith. And why was it necessary to bequeath some precepts of faith to the Church via the unwritten word, by word of mouth rather than by letter? Again the Bible furnishes the answer:

"This is the disciple who bears witness concerning these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his witness is true. There are, however, many other things that Jesus did; but if every one of these should be written, not even the world itself, I think, could hold the books that would have to be written" (John 21: 24-25).

So we have the Bible's own word for it that there were some things which Jesus said and did, some things which the Apostles taught, that were not written down, that did not find their way into the Bible, not because they were relatively unimportant *but because it would have involved an impossible writing assignment.* Had the Apostles and their disciples attempted to record all of Our Lord's doings and teachings they would have had no time left for preaching and organizing and administering the Sacraments to the soul starved masses, the majority of whom could not read anyway.

Now the question arises: What made me so sure that the tradition upon which the Catholic Church bases some of her articles of faith is the tradition, the unrecorded teachings of Christ, mentioned in the Bible? A little objective research, plus a little objective Christian reasoning, made me sure. Going back over the mainstream of Christian belief and practice since Christianity began I discovered, much to my surprise, that all of the other ancient and semi-ancient Christian churches – Coptic, Greek Orthodox and Russian Orthodox – hold to the same traditional beliefs as the Catholic Church, indicating that acceptance of them was universal prior to the advent of Protestantism. Also it occurred to me that if the tradition upon which the Catholic Church bases some of her doctrines is not the tradition mentioned in the Bible, what has

become of it? Could it be that some of Christ's teachings have become extinct? To this I had to answer in conscience that after having suffered ignominy on the Cross to plant His truth in the world God would not permit it, nor any part of it, to become extinct. "Heaven and earth will pass away," He said, "but my words will not pass away" (*Mark 13:31*). The tradition upon which the Catholic Church bases some of her articles of faith must, therefore, be the tradition mentioned in the Bible, *because it is the only tradition upon which articles of Christian faith are based.*

These discoveries, these revelations of the Bible, left no doubt in my mind that the Catholic Church is in very truth the teaching Church of Christ my Saviour.

But as compelling as these discoveries were I still did not have the strength of will to hand myself over. Force of habit is a mighty force, I found, quite capable of resisting some of the strongest mental persuasions. It plays tricks on the mind, it *anesthetizes* the mind, it creates the illusion in the mind that custom, somehow, is a profound truth in itself, one which transcends all other truths. I was a Protestant not by choice, my subconscious kept insisting, but by heredity, that is by *nature*, therefore the "natural" thing for me to do was remain a Protestant.

Still force of habit and all the excuses of my subconscious were no match for the grace of God. In time Divine Providence opened my eyes to yet another Bible revelation, *one so rife with eternal consequences it defied all resistance.* Had I remained out of the Catholic Church after this Bible truth was made known to me I would have had to abandon my conscience altogether. I would have had to lift my eyes to heaven and say: "Not thy Will, Lord, but mine be done."

Speaking to me right out of the pages of the Bible Christ my Lord said:

"I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the desert, and have died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that if anyone eat of it he will not die. I am the living bread that has come down from heaven. If anyone eat of this bread he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world" (John 6:48-52).

I contemplated those words long and hard. I had been told by my Protestant mentors that Christ was speaking in the figurative sense, that is the bread He promised to give for the life of the world was not to be construed as His actual flesh but bread "symbolic" of His flesh, or at best ordinary bread in which His flesh would be spiritually, "sacramentally," present. But the more I contemplated His words the more I suspected that there was something drastically wrong with this interpretation. How, I asked myself, could bread manufactured here on earth by sinful man be called bread that has come down from heaven? How could earthly bread impart life to the soul? How could a "symbol" of Christ's Flesh be called *His* Flesh? How can one "eat" spiritual or sacramental flesh?

Faced with these perplexing questions I sought for the answers elsewhere in Sacred Scripture – I resorted to "interpretation by correlation," the method of interpretation which had served me so well before. And again this method did not fail me. I found that the Jews to whom Our Blessed Lord addressed His words *did not* understand Him to mean symbolical or spiritual bread. *They understood Him to mean bread that consisted of His true and living Flesh.* "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" they argued (*John 6:53*). Christ was speaking not in the figurative sense but in the *literal* sense, those Jews surmised; and they must have surmised correctly because Christ made no attempt to change their thinking; instead He repeated himself laying even greater stress on the literal sense of His words:

"Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his

blood, you shall not have life in you. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has life everlasting and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed" (John 6:54-56).

No, He did not retract even when many of His disciples, scandalized at the literal implication of His words, deserted Him (*John 6:67*). He even told the Apostles that they, too, could desert Him before He would subtract one iota from the literal import of His words (*John 6:68*). Christ must have meant what He said. In truth He must have intended to nourish mankind with the divine soul-saving food of His own Flesh and Blood, *otherwise He would not have been so adamant, so unwaveringly specific.*

But how? How could the faithful actually partake of His true and living Flesh and Blood? That was what the Jews wanted to know and that was what I wanted to know. Only there was this difference between the Jews and myself – like the Apostles I had faith that somehow it could be done; like the Apostles I believed that with Christ, with Divinity, all things are possible; like the Apostles I exercised patience and was rewarded for my patience. Searching the Scriptures further I learned exactly how Christ intended to give His Flesh and Blood for the faithful to eat and drink – *I found the full explanation contained in the account of the Last Supper:*

"And while they were at supper, Jesus took bread, and blessed and broke, and gave it to his disciples, and said, 'Take and eat; THIS IS MY BODY.' And taking a cup, he gave thanks and gave it to them, saying, 'All of you drink of this; FOR THIS IS MY BLOOD'" (Matt. 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-24, Luke 22:19-20).

The bread and wine of Holy Communion, that was it! The bread and wine of Holy Communion were not mere symbols or spiritual repositories of Christ as I had been led to believe but were in truth bread and wine miraculously transformed by the Power of God into His true and living Flesh and Blood, only the appearance of bread and wine remaining. Not only did I have the words of the promise and the words of the fulfillment of the promise to convince me of this, I had the words of the Apostles – they too believed that the bread and wine duly consecrated on the altar became the actual physical Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. Wrote the Apostle Paul:

"The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not the sharing of the blood of Christ? And the bread that we break, is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord?" (I Cor. 10:16). "But let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup; for he who eats and drinks unworthily, without distinguishing the body of the Lord, eats and drinks judgment to himself" (I Cor. 11:28-29).

What further proof did I need? None at all for the Bible was my criteria of divine truth and the Bible could not have been more explicit.

Yet, lest there be some lingering suspicions, I sought out the opinion of the primitive Church Fathers on the matter. If anyone was in a position to corroborate the testimony of the Apostles it was they, for they had been the disciples of the Apostles, their interpretation of Sacred Scripture was obtained firsthand from the very authors of Sacred Scripture.

It turned out that the primitive Church Fathers had a great deal to say on the subject and it turned out that all of them were in perfect agreement. Those illustrious leaders of the infant Christian Church called the bread and wine consecrated on their altars the "Eucharist" and they unanimously maintained that by virtue of the consecration it was no longer common foodstuffs but had become, by the Omnipotent Power of God, the true Flesh and Blood of Jesus Christ.

Wrote Ignatius, disciple of the Apostle John, concerning the heretics of his day: "They

have abstained from the Eucharist and prayer, because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of Our Savior Jesus Christ."

Wrote Justin Martyr, another Church Father of the second century: "This food is known among us as the Eucharist... We do not receive these things as common bread and common drink; but as Jesus Christ our Saviour, being made flesh by the Word of God."

Wrote Cyril of Jerusalem, venerable Church Father of the fourth century: "Since then He has declared and said of the bread, 'This is my body,' who after that will venture to doubt? And seeing that He has affirmed and said, 'This is my blood,' who will raise a question and say it is not His blood?"

There was now no room left in my mind for even the slightest vestige of doubt. Not only did the Church Fathers substantiate my interpretation of these particular passages of Scripture but they did so in the strongest, most unequivocal language possible. And so did all of the great Christian apologists of succeeding centuries concur with me. Indeed, I found that it was not until comparatively recent times, until modernism began infecting Christianity with its fondness for reckless speculation, that any professed Christian held a contrary opinion. Obviously the "symbol" and the "spiritual repository" theories to which Protestantism holds and to which I had held all my life was wrong, entirely wrong.

What a spot to be in! There in the Bible was Christ my Lord telling me that I needed to eat of His Flesh and drink of His Blood in order to have eternal happiness with Him in heaven... there in the Bible was the Apostle Paul telling me that I should prove my faith by distinguishing the Body and Blood of Christ in the consecrated bread and wine of the altar... there in history were the Church Fathers condemning as heretics all Christians who do not confess belief in the Real Presence . . . and there was I without this divine soul saving food, this proof of my faith, this assurance that I belonged to Christ's true Apostolic Church.

It was a desperate situation, one that called for immediate and positive action. And act immediately I did, following the same course of action I am sure you would have followed, dear friend in Christ, under identical circumstances: I went in search of that Church which could give me the true and living Christ in Holy Communion, not common everyday bread and wine which I could find on any grocer's shelf.

Throughout all of Protestantism I searched but to no avail. Always I was informed that the Communion bread and wine were common foodstuffs, sacramental foodstuffs to be sure but in no wise the real Body and Blood of Christ. *Always the Communion bread and wine were substitutions of the Body and Blood of Christ.* To emphasize this point one minister consigned the leftover Communion bread to his chickens. Another, an avowed teetotaler, served his congregation grape juice in place of wine and when the leftover grape juice fermented - down the drain. No irreverence was intended, they simply believed in their hearts that the sacredness of a sacramental, whether it be the bread and wine (or grape juice) of Holy Communion or the water of Baptism, exists only in the mind, not in the sacramental itself. Accordingly the chickens and the drain pipe had not received Holy Communion.

Now it was up to the Catholic Church to show me the glorious fulfillment of Christ's promise. And show me she did. Yes, it was in the Catholic Church, the "Roman" Catholic Church, that I found the manna which has come down from heaven, the Communion bread and wine which was in truth the Body and Blood of Christ my Saviour. The Catholic Church declared that it was so and when I witnessed the profound solemnity of the Consecration on her altar, when I witnessed the hush that fell over the congregation at that moment, when I witnessed the radiance and peace that shown on the faces of the communicants, *when I myself felt His Divine Presence pervading the atmosphere*, I had to

agree that it must indeed be so.

How could it be otherwise? Could those Catholics and the hundreds of millions that preceded them back through the centuries to the very dawn of Christianity all be the victims of hallucination? Hardly. Hallucinations become less prevalent with the advance of civilization, not more prevalent. Hallucinations do not inspire the building of the world's greatest private network of universities and scientific laboratories. Hallucinations do not attract such people as Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Louis Pasteur, Madam Curie, Marconi and many of the modern world's leading industrialists, people to whom realism is a veritable fetish.

No, this was no hallucination I had witnessed, *it was faith in the Integrity and Power of Jesus Christ*. Those Catholics had come to a most realistic conclusion: Jesus Christ is God, therefore He has the power to change bread and wine into His Flesh and Blood on the altar without effecting a change in the appearance of the transformed bread and wine; and Jesus Christ promised that He would do just that so that His faithful could receive Him Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity into themselves for their sanctification, therefore His promise has been and still is being kept. Those Catholics were simply believing in the Bible as I was committed in conscience to believe in the Bible. *They were simply believing what Christ expects all of His faithful followers to believe.*

The Sacrament of the Real Presence is also called the Blessed Sacrament in the Catholic Church. But to me it was a blessed Sacrament in more ways than one. For it was my discovery of the true and living Christ in this Sacrament of the Catholic Church which inspired me to inquire into her six other Sacraments. Did the other six also enjoy an abundance of scriptural support? I wanted to know. Not that I expected to find them without scriptural support – I was convinced down deep in my heart that the church wherein dwelt the Real Presence of Christ would certainly be the church wherein dwelt the full complement of His Sacraments – but I felt that it was expedient that I should make a clean sweep of the Catholic Sacraments while I was on the subject, expedient that I should have my conviction confirmed.

Needless to say my conviction was confirmed. One by one I went over the six other Sacraments with a Catholic priest and one by one he backed them up with a host of Scripture texts. Take the Catholic Sacrament of Penance, the confessing of one's sins to a priest, for example. That is the one non-Catholics seem to have the most difficulty with. Opening his Bible my priest consultant read to me:

"And Jesus came and stood in the midst of his disciples, and said to them, 'Peace be to you! And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples therefore rejoiced at the sight of the Lord. He therefore said to them again, 'Peace be to you! As the Father has sent me, I also send you.' When he had said this, he breathed upon them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.'" (John 20:19-23).

"But wasn't the prerogative of forgiving sins given to all of the faithful and not just to the clergy?" I asked. Again this priest read to me from the Bible:

"Is anyone among you sick? Let him bring in the presbyters of the Church, and let them pray over him..., and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him" (James 5:14-15).

And he quoted many other passages. He made it quite obvious that the Sacrament of Penance was a valid, Biblically supported Sacrament of Christ's Church, the administering of which was a special prerogative of the presbyters, the clergy, of the Church. And he made it quite obvious that all of the other Catholic Sacraments – Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Orders, Matrimony and Extreme Unction – likewise were valid, Biblically supported Sacraments of Christ's Church. In fact, I had never before seen so much Scripture thrown

in support of Christian doctrine.

What a shame that the full import of those passages of Scripture had escaped me before, although I know that I must have read them hundreds of times. But what a joy that their full import had not continued to escape me. God had indeed answered my prayers for enlightenment.

There was nothing left for me to do now but become a Catholic. All resistance, every mental reservation I had ever entertained about the great Mother Church of Christianity, was gone, thanks to the Holy Bible and the grace of God. The Catholic Church, I was convinced in my mind and in my soul, is everything she claims to be. Either she is the one true Church of Jesus Christ, His Mystical Body on earth, or the Bible is not worth the paper it is printed on.

The transition from Protestantism to Catholicism was a lot easier than I thought it would be. I had imagined that there would be a storm of resentment among my relatives and members of my immediate family. I imagined that my wife in particular would raise Old Ned because I never once heard her say a good thing about the Catholic Church. And I feared that my fellow Protestant clerics, whose warm friendship I cherished, would never again speak to me, except perhaps to castigate me for being a "traitor."

But, surprisingly, such was not the case at all. After that initial shock which an announcement of this kind invariably produces I was confronted not with a wave of resentment and antipathy but with a wave of curiosity and wonderment. There were a few isolated instances of ridicule, of condemnation, but by and large my freedom of conscience was respected. By and large the reaction was not "Curse you for doing it!" but "Why did you do it?" My family and my really close friends knew that I would never willfully go counter to the Will of God - *they knew that my loyalty to Jesus Christ superceded all other loyalties*. They simply wanted to know why my loyalty to Christ should become so drastically altered in the mode of its expression.

And when I did explain why my family and many of my friends became closer to me than ever - *they followed me into the Catholic Church*. Like me they came to realize that the Catholic faith is the genuine Bible faith. Like me they wanted the ineffable joy of being united to Christ in the fullness of His Gospel, in the fullness of His Sacraments and in the fullness of His Grace. Like me they would let no prejudice stand in the way of Christ's holy Truth.

So with that my story ends. Now you know, dear reader, why I and countless thousands like me embrace the Catholic faith year after year, century after century. Committed in conscience to abide by the Word of God we simply had no other choice.

Sincerely yours in Jesus Christ,

PAUL WHITCOMB