

Soul Winning: The Christian's Business

by

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Chapter Eleven

Form with Fear

You Can Win Converts is the title of a booklet printed by the Roman Catholic Church. *

* Please note that I speak of them as Roman Catholics as the Episcopalians consider themselves Anglican Catholics. They refuse to give up the word Catholic as it means universal or whole. Many Protestants repeat the Apostles' Creed each Sunday which includes the phrase "*I believe in a . . . catholic Church.*"

Too, the 1958 edition of *The Official Catholic Directory* reported that for the twelfth year in succession converts to Catholicism had topped the 100,000 mark. Surely if the Roman Catholics can win converts to their church, Protestants can win converts to CHRIST.

In discussing religion with Roman Catholics you must first free your mind from the preconceived notion that all Catholics are lost and going to hell. Some may be. So are some who attend Protestant churches. But others are devout Christians. Some are better Christians than some Protestants. Once you recognize that truth, there are several definite things which the Protestant religions offer the Catholic.

Simplicity of Faith

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that CHRIST was the divine Son of GOD and that He died to save sinners. That is your meeting ground with the Roman Catholic. Be thankful for it. However, added to this are other doctrines which the Roman Church requires their communicants to believe. Your desire is to help them separate these other doctrines from their salvation, which is a matter of heart-attitude toward GOD. Quote to them, "**For by grace are ye saved through faith: and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast**" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

When you repeat this verse, many times they will say "but" to you. Naturally you have to admit that "**faith without works is dead**" (James 2:20). Our works do follow after but at the best, we do not have too many of them. Therefore, you want to try to lead the Roman Catholic into the freedom of resting in grace.

Most people, even many sincere Protestant Christians, feel that their works help them to get to Heaven. This is a most discouraging philosophy because everyone is not able to do an equal amount of "works" and no one would ever know if he had done enough to get to Heaven. We must accept the fact that our salvation is a gift - "**not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us**" (Titus 3:5).

Understandable Church Service

As you know, most of the Roman Catholic mass is conducted in Latin [1959]. They claim that this is so the mass is the same all over the world and therefore a person can follow the mass in his prayer book which is printed in both Latin and whatever other language he speaks.

The fact remains that most people do not follow it in English. Rather, they often sit in the pew bored. It is not necessary for it to be in Latin. The Anglican Catholic or Episcopal Church has a similar mass in English or the language of the country in which the service is conducted.

The average Roman Catholic is attracted by the thought of a service in an understandable language but are held back from making a change by their fear of the power of the Church.

Tyranny of Rome

The Roman Catholic people have long been held in subjection by the power of the Pope and the hierarchy of the church. It is not as apparent in the United States as it is in Latin or South America and some parts of Europe. But the Roman Catholic Church has a long history of the suppression of progress as typified by their treatment of Galileo (1540-1642). He improved the telescope until it became astronomically important and advanced the theory that the sun moved around the earth. For promulgating this heresy he was summoned to Rome and forced to recant. The Roman Church permits no one to differ with her opinions.

Too, there was the terror of the Inquisition which swept over Europe. No one knows how many earnest Christians were tortured and put to death. A Catholic historian admits only 4,000, but Zurite, a secretary of the Inquisition, boasted that it had burned 4,000 in Seville alone.

The attitude of the Roman Church toward the Inquisition is that it is history - that men were not as enlightened in those days. But the anti-Semitism in Europe in the last twenty years proved that we dare allow no human organization to become too powerful. It is easier to kill one's enemies than to reason with them.

Freedom from False Doctrine

The strongest argument of the Roman Church is its claim to be the original Christian church.

Actually, the early church was a number of small autonomous churches until the time of Constantine. He, in an effort to have unity in the church, called the Council of Nicene in 325, and that may be considered the beginning of the Roman Church. It was not, however, until 500 A.D. that the title pope (papa) hitherto given to all western bishops, began to be restricted to the bishop of Rome.

Even the Roman Church admits, "We Catholics acknowledge readily, without any shame, and with pride, that Catholicism cannot be identified simply and wholly with primitive Christianity, nor even with the Gospel of CHRIST, in the same way that a great oak cannot be identified with the tiny acorn" (*The Spirit of Catholicism*, by Karl Adam).

Protestantism has long been a part of the Christian religion

Down through the centuries there have been sects apart from the established church.

The Anabaptists (a name given to them by their enemies because they objected to infant baptism) was flourishing prior to 1525. At that time Thomas Munzer, one of their leaders, was tortured and put to death. And Martin Luther's struggle with the Roman Church only began in 1517 when he nailed his famous ninety-five propositions to the church door in Wittenberg.

Nor did the Episcopal Church separate from Rome because Henry VIII wanted to divorce his wife and remarry. The Roman Church makes this assertion almost daily. It is true that in 1534 Henry VIII disagreed with the Pope. But the Episcopal Church was not established until during the reign of Elizabeth I. To quote one of their official books, "The division in the Church did not come until A.D. 1570 when, following her refusal to marry King Philip II of Spain, Pope Pius V excommunicated Queen Elizabeth I and the entire Church in England" (*A Very Brief History of the Episcopal Church*).

This might not be important but for the fact that the Roman Church teaches (with a few minor exceptions) that there is salvation only in it. However, when witnessing to a Catholic, avoid speaking of his church as much as possible. Even use the Douay Version of the Bible when dealing with him. He will feel more at ease with it. It is called the Douay Version because the Old Testament was translated at Douay and was issued in its complete form by the Roman Church in 1601.

Even so the way of salvation is clear in this version. For instance: "*If we acknowledge our sins, he is faithful and just, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from iniquity*" (I John 1:9).

Or "*Because Christ also died once for our sins, the just for the unjust, that he might offer us to God, being put to death in the flesh, he was brought to life in the spirit*" (I Peter 3:18).

Another false doctrine of the Roman Church is her teaching about the Virgin Mary.

When discussing Mary be careful not to make the mistake of saying that they worship her. A well-trained Roman will immediately reply that they do not worship Mary but that they reverence her. True, Protestants follow the Biblical instruction to pray directly to our Heavenly Father but arguing about the Virgin Mary is a sideline - particularly as an approach.

There is no doubt but that the Romans give her more honor than does the Bible.

They state "Catholics believe that from the moment of her conception Mary was preserved free from original sin. This is what is known as the Immaculate Conception, often confused with the Virgin Birth - which, of course, refers to the birth of CHRIST" (from "*What is a Catholic?*" by John Cogley, executive editor of *The Commonwealth*, a national Catholic weekly).

Protestants find no proof whatsoever to believe that there was anything special about Mary's conception. True, she was "**highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women**" (Luke 1:28).

You will, however, best stick to the subject of the Lord.

In time you will be able to persuade your Roman friend to discuss the more involved questions of doctrine with your pastor.

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