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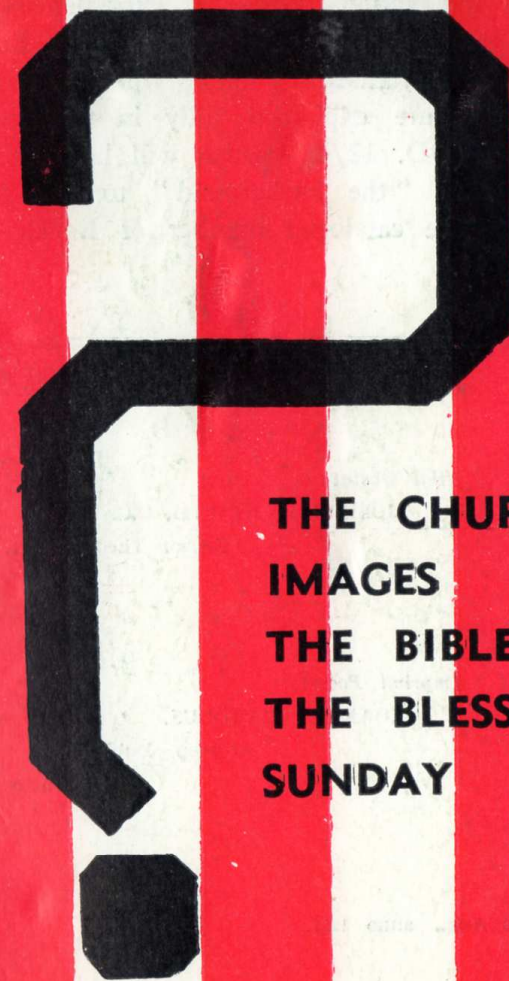
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CATHOLIC ANSWERS TO
QUESTIONS

3^d



**THE CHURCH
IMAGES
THE BIBLE
THE BLESSED VIRGIN
SUNDAY**

Booklet II

POSED BY

The National Union of Protestants

NOTE.

This is the second of a series of three booklets prepared by Rev. S. O'Riordan, C.S.S.R., and J. J. W. Murphy, C.S.S.R. It contains replies to questions posed by the National Union of Protestants (Ireland) to the Redemptorist Fathers at Clonard, Belfast in 1949. The circumstances under which the questions were posed are explained fully in a foreword to Booklet I (DD. 12/42) which will help the reader to appreciate "the background" to this series of booklets. The catalogue number of Booklet III is DD. 12/44.

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS*

NOTE

The answers given herein have been grouped under the headings used by the National Union of Protestants when submitting its questions. There are three groups of answers, each published in a separate booklet. The present booklet (II) contains answers on the Church, Images, the Bible, the Virgin Mary, and Sunday. Booklet I contains answers on the Pope, Indulgences, Saints, Marriage, Gambling and Drinking, and Booklet III on Confession, Tradition, Purgatory, the Mass, the Sacraments and Politics.

THE CHURCH

N.U.P. Questions

- (1) *What is the interpretation of the word "church" according to your faith?*
- (2) *What is the meaning of the word "Catholic" and has any religious denomination the exclusive right to use this word?*
- (3) *What is the Scriptural foundation of your Church?*

Our Answers

(1) A Church, in the most general sense of the term, is any religious organisation the members of which are united in the profession of a common religious faith, particularly of some form or other of the Christian faith, the "foundation and focus" of which is "the doctrine of Our Saviour's divinity" (Pope Pius XII, October 20, 1939).

Among the various Churches professing faith in Our Saviour's divinity, the Roman Catholic Church believes that she and she alone corresponds to the actual religious organisation originally established by Christ. In other words, she claims to be the one true Church of Christ, entrusted by Him with the task of transmitting the full measure of His saving truth to mankind.

*New Testament texts occurring in these answers are quoted according to accurate English versions of the original Greek. The Protestants Revised Version is, from this point of view, much superior to the popular Authorised Version. See the answer to the question: "Why has your Church banned even burned, the Holy Scripture in many parts of the world?" (Book II, "The Bible").

This is the meaning of the principle: "Outside the Church there is no salvation." It does not mean that every man or woman who rejects the claims of the Roman Catholic Church will be damned. Believing as she does that her claims are true, the Church must believe also that the wilful rejection of these claims is always gravely sinful. But wilful rejection is one thing, honest ignorance or sincere denial another. "Those who are inculpably ignorant of our holy religion," wrote Pope Pius IX in 1868, "who live an honourable and upright life, carefully observing the law and commands of nature, which are imprinted by God on the hearts of all, and who are ready to obey God, can attain eternal life by the operation of the power of divine light and grace."

(2) "Catholic," from the Greek *kath holon*, means "universal." As a description of the Church of Christ, the word is first found in the Letter to the Smyrnans of St. Ignatius of Antioch, who died about 110 A.D. The special function of the term "Catholic Church" in ancient times was to distinguish the one true visible Church of Christ from the heretical party-churches. Thus St. Cyril of Jerusalem tells those who are under instruction for baptism that if they go into a strange town they should not merely ask: "Where is the place of worship?" since the heretical bodies have places of worship also; not even: "Where is the Church?" but "Where is the Catholic Church?" "For that," he says, "is the proper name of the Holy Church, the Mother of us all, the Spouse of Our Lord Jesus Christ" (Catech. 18, 26: about 350 A.D.).

In virtue of her exclusive claim to unbroken continuity with the one true Church of the first centuries, the Roman Catholic Church believes that she alone has a strict right to call herself "Catholic." In popular usage too "Catholic" and "Roman Catholic" are largely interchangeable terms. As for the term "non-Catholic": when individual Catholics apply it to their Protestant fellow-Christians, they do so on the assumption that those who base their faith on the written Scriptures alone will not object to being called "non-Catholics"—just as Roman Catholics would not object to being called "non-Protestants"

—since the term "Catholic" is not found in Scripture but is derived from Tradition.

In practice, however, few Protestants would care to think of themselves as strangers to "the holy Catholic Church" of the ancient Creeds. In deference to such feelings we refrained from describing our lectures of Lent 1949 as a "Mission to Non-Catholics," which was the term used to describe those of Lent and Advent 1948. Instead, we invited the public to a series of "Lectures for All Denominations," in which we spoke of the Catholic or the Roman Catholic Church indiscriminately (the two terms mean the same thing to us), while leaving others free to understand the word "Catholic" in their own sense.

(3) When Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ gathered His disciples round Him long ago in Palestine, He formed them into a visible fellowship or brotherhood of which He Himself was the divine Head. The core of this brotherhood was made up of the Apostles or "the twelve," as they are called in twenty-nine passages of the Gospels—twelve particular men who were recognisable to all the world as the first disciples or followers of Christ. To one of them, Simon Bar-Jona, He gave a new and special name, Peter: in Greek *Petros*, in Aramaic *Kepha*, the Rock (cf. Mark 3, 16; John 1, 42).

At Caesarea Philippi Christ asked His disciples the question: "Whom say ye that I am?" Simon Peter answered: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." It was then that Christ first promised, in express terms, to found a "church" (in Greek *ecclesia*, in Aramaic *kenishta*) and to found it on Peter: "Thou art *Kepha* and upon this *kepha* I will build my Church."⁽¹⁾ He added that nothing should ever be able to under-

(1) Representative Protestant scholars have long since ceased to question the identity of *Petros* and *petra*, corresponding to the double *Kepha* of the Aramaic original, in the Greek text of St. Matthew. It is, wrote G. B. Steven in 1906, "quite certain, and is now generally admitted, that the words 'this rock' refer, not to Christ, nor to Peter's confession of faith, but to Peter himself" (*Theology of the New Testament*, p. 189). For a full commentary on Matt. 16, 18-19 see Dr. A. Plummer (Anglican), *St. Matthew*. "St. Peter is," he writes, "not only the rock to support the Church, and the steward to hold the Keys of the Kingdom, he is also the teacher who can give an authoritative decision."

mine this Church: "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16, 13-18).

Before His Ascension into Heaven, Christ laid down the whole future programme of their activity for the Apostles: "Go therefore, teach all nations, baptising 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" (Matt. 28, 19-20).

Thus the essential task imposed on the Apostles was not that of compiling a written record of Christ's teaching but that of "teaching all nations," transmitting to them the teachings of Christ Himself. In the carrying out of this task the Apostles would not be left to their own feeble and fallible resources. He to Whom "all power has been given in heaven and on earth" would be with them to the end of time, ensuring the fidelity of His Church's teachings to His own: "Behold I am with you all days even to the end of the world" (Matt. 28, 18-20).

On the day of Pentecost, the "men of Galilee" (Acts 1, 11), Christ's visible fellowship presided over by Peter (1, 15), were "baptised with the Holy Ghost" (1, 5). Immediately the Apostles began to fulfil their task of teaching mankind, Peter again taking the lead (2, 14-36, 38-40), and the Church, the visible brotherhood, increased its membership day by day (2, 47).

Thus the Church of Christ's first disciples was

- (a) a distinct, visible fellowship of men and women;
- (b) a fellowship of which Peter was the visible head;
- (c) a fellowship based on an infallible apostolic teaching authority. "And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and prayers" (Acts 2, 42: Revised Version).

As time went on the teaching of the Apostles was carried farther and farther afield, especially by St. Paul, in whom it found its greatest single propagator. Soon the Christian fellowship reached from Jerusalem to Rome. Did this new and universal Church differ in its essential structure from the

Church of the first disciples out of which it had grown? No. It was still a distinct, visible fellowship, though it was now world-wide. It was still based on the teaching authority of the apostles. It still recognised the headship of Peter. True, St. Paul had to "withstand him to the face" on one occasion because he had given up his practice of eating with the Gentiles (Gal. 2, 11-12). But this was only a case of recalling Peter to the full observance of the principle laid down by himself at the Council of Jerusalem that there was now "no difference" between Jew and Gentile (Acts 15, 7).⁽¹⁾ St. Paul himself nearly always refers to Peter as Kephas, a Greek adaptation of kepha, the rock. Thus he names Kephas first among the witnesses to the Resurrection (I Cor. 15, 5), though, as the Gospel narratives clearly show, Our Lord had not appeared to Peter first in order of time.

Peter and Paul, the Apostles and the first disciples, all passed away long centuries ago. Did the Church which they constituted pass away with them? Or did it only survive in an entirely altered form, no longer based on a living teaching authority safeguarded from error by the power of God but on the private and fallible interpretation of the written New Testament which, divinely inspired as it was, did not begin to come into existence for several years after the foundation of the Church and was not completed until the closing years of the first century? If this fundamental change did really take place in the essential structure of the Church, then Christ's promise that His Church—the Church of the first disciples, the Church of the Apostolic age—should endure to the end of

(1) "At the Council of Jerusalem it was the Apostle James who presided, although Peter was present (Acts 15, 18-19)" (N.U.P. *Questions*, p.8) Peter was not merely present at the Council; he addressed it first and his was the decisive speech. "And when there had been much questioning, Peter rose up and said to them: Brethren . . . why do you tempt God that you should put a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? . . . And all the multitude kept silence" (Acts 15, 7-12). James is nowhere represented as having presided at the Council. He put forward a personal "judgment" (Acts 15, 19, Revised Version: not "sentence" as in the Authorised Version) which:

- (a) endorsed the principle already formulated by Peter;
- (b) added to it a practical proposal to the effect that the Gentile Christians should be required to abstain from certain practices repugnant to Jewish sentiment. This was also accepted by the Council (Acts 15, 18-29).

time was made in vain. Therefore His Church must be still in existence, possessing the same essential form as it had from the beginning. Where then shall we find it in the world of to-day?

It must be found, if it is to be found at all, in a Church which is:—

- (a) a distinct, visible fellowship of men and women;
- (b) a fellowship of which a legitimate successor of Peter is the visible head;
- (c) a fellowship based on an infallible teaching authority guaranteed, as that of the Apostles was, by the divine power of the living Christ.

There is only one Church in the entire world which even claims to possess these three characteristics. It is the Roman Catholic Church.

Such, in the briefest possible outline, is the Scriptural foundation on which the Roman Catholic Church bases her claims.

IMAGES

N.U.P. Questions

- (1) *How do you explain the Commandment of God regarding the worship of images as recorded in the following Scriptures: Exod. 20, 4; Lev. 26, 1; John 4, 24; Acts 17, 25; I Cor. 10, 20?*
- (2) *Is it not a fact that your church officially teaches the veneration of Mary and the saints, and also teaches that the nails and wood of the Cross are to be adored?*

Our Answers

Question (2) should logically precede question (1), so we will take it first.

(2) (a) Yes, the Catholic Church officially teaches that it "is good and useful" to venerate Mary and the saints. This does not mean that we give them the divine worship which is due to God alone; that would be idolatry, one of the greatest of

all sins. We give them merely the affectionate veneration which is, we believe, due to them as friends and faithful followers of Christ. Moreover, we ask them to pray to God for us, believing that He does not take from the power of His saints when He calls them from earth to Heaven. Now on earth men can pray for and ask prayers of each other (e.g., 2 Thess. 1, 11; James 5, 16). St. Paul constantly prayed for his fellow-men while he was on earth (e.g., I Thess. 5, 25); it is difficult to see why he should have ceased to be able to do so when he went to Heaven. The argument that if the saints in Heaven do actually pray for us, the only Mediator, Christ, becomes merely one mediator among many, will not hold water. Christ is the Mediator of redemption and the only one; without His essential mediatorship there would be no grace at all. When we pray for others during our years on earth we do so in dependence on this essential mediatorship, begging God for the sake of His beloved Son to bestow His grace more abundantly on those for whom we pray. This is exactly what, according to Catholic teaching, the saints do in Heaven; this is all we ask them to do for us. Why then should the Catholic doctrine of the invocation of saints be regarded as a denial of the Mediatorship of Christ?

St. John's revelation explicitly teaches that angelic intercessors present "the prayers of the saints" to God in Heaven (5, 8; 8, 3). The doctrine that the angels and saints in heaven can pray for us and that we may ask them to do so is further attested by early Christian tradition. Thus, during the first decade of the second century (about 110 A.D.), St. Ignatius of Antioch wrote to the Trallians on the eve of his martyrdom: "My spirit is offered up for you, not only now, but also when I shall attain unto God" (Ep. ad Trall. 13). In the next century we have the words of St. Cyprian, bishop of Carthage (d. 258), written to Cornelius of Rome: "If one of us shall, by the speediness of the divine mercy, depart hence the first, let our love continue in the presence of the Lord; let not prayer for our brethren and sisters cease in the presence of the Father" (Ep. ad Cornel. 57).

It may be replied that this exposition of Catholic theory sounds quite reasonable but that in practice Catholics often

pray to the saints, especially to the Virgin Mary, as if they were divine beings. Does not St. Alphonsus Liguori use the most exuberant language about the power of Mary in his book *The Glories of Mary*? Do not Catholics say in one of the commonest of their prayers: "Hail, our life, our sweetness and our hope!"?

So they do in the sincerity and tenderness of their love for God's Mother to whom they speak in the unaffected language of the heart. Why should they not do so when Elizabeth, the mother of the Baptist, spoke in the same way to Mary while she was still on earth: "Blessed are thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And when is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke 1, 42-43). To those who do not understand it, the language of love always sounds extravagant. If Protestants who object to the "extravagance" of *The Glories of Mary* would only read another of St. Alphonsus's works, *The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ*, they would find the same "extravagance" there; only this time it would be the extravagance of his love for the one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.

(b) Catholics reject as a complete misrepresentation of their belief and practice the idea that they "adore" the nails and wood of the Cross *in themselves*." Nails and wood are nails and wood, nothing more; similarly paper is paper and nothing more. Yet a child will kiss its mother's photograph, not because it loves and respects the paper of which the photograph is made, but because it loves and respects its mother who is represented by the photograph. In the same way we Catholics "adore the Cross," not as though we adored the material of which it is made, but because it represents to us Christ Our Saviour Who was crucified on the Cross for our sins; it is to Him and to Him alone that our adoration is given.

The whole Catholic doctrine of the veneration of images, whether of Christ or of the saints, is summed up in the definition of the Sacred Council of Nicaea (787). "We define with all certainty and care that both the figure of the sacred and life-giving Cross, as also the venerable and holy images . . .

are to be placed suitably in the holy churches of God . . .; that is to say, the images of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, of our immaculate Lady the holy Mother of God, of the honourable angels and all saints and holy men. For as often as they are seen in their pictorial representations, people who look at them are ardently lifted up to the memory and love of the originals and induced to give them respect and reverential honour, but not real devotion which, according to our faith, is due only to the Divine Nature. So that offerings of incense and lights are to be given to these as to the figure of the sacred and life-giving Cross, to the holy Gospel-books and other sacred objects in order to do them honour, as was the pious custom of ancient times. For honour paid to an image passes on to its original; he who venerates an image venerates the reality of him who is painted on it" (Mansi, *Concil*, XIII, 378-9).⁽¹⁾

(1) (a) Three points emerge from a careful study of the Old Testament regulations concerning the making of images (Exod. 20, 3-5); Lev. 26, 1: to which should be added Exod. 34, 17; Deut. 4, 15-19; 23, 25-26; 5, 6-9; 27, 15):

1. God forbids any representation of the divinity, even of the true God;
2. God forbids the making of an image of any creature *for the purpose of adoring it*;
3. God does not forbid the making of every kind of image. In fact He ordered Moses to place "two cherubim of gold" in the Ark of the Covenant (Exod. 25, 18; cf. 26, 1. 31). Again He ordered the brazen serpent to be erected in the wilderness (Num. 21, 8). When, however, the Israelites began to treat the brazen serpent as an idol, Hezekiah destroyed it (2 Kings 18, 3-4).⁽²⁾

The underlying principle of the Old Testament legislation of image-making is obvious. The making and veneration of

(1) Similarly he who dishonours an image dishonours the reality of him who is represented by it. If it is lawful to burn a bad man in effigy—the practice is not unknown in Ulster—why should it not be lawful to honour Christ, the Virgin Mary and the Saints in effigy? The principle in both cases is the same.

(2) 4 Kings 18, 3-4 in the Catholic Bible.

images were not regarded by the Jews as evil in themselves but strict precautions were laid down in view of the circumstances of the times, to prevent the people of God from lapsing into the idolatrous practices of their heathen neighbours.

Was it the intention of God that these precautions should hold good for all times and places, so that Christians under "the law of Christ" (Gal. 6, 2) should be bound by them as the Jews were under the laws of Moses? If so, then it follows logically that Christians are bound by the whole ceremonial code of Israel, of which these precautions formed a structural part. But the New Testament repeatedly declares that Christians are not bound by this code (Rom. 8, 1-2; Gal. 3, 23-25; Acts 15, 28-29), though they are, of course, bound by the eternal principle of right and wrong which finds expression in many parts of it (cf. Gal. 5, 19-21). Thus idolatry and impurity are always and everywhere wrong; not so the veneration of images or the non-observance of the seventh day of the week as "a sabbath unto the Lord thy God" (Exod. 20, 10). It is inconsistent on the part of Protestants to accept the modification which Christian Tradition has sanctioned as regards the weekly day of rest—we now keep it on Sunday, not on Saturday—and to reject the modifications which the same Tradition has sanctioned, in view of altered circumstances, as regards the veneration of images.

(b) John 4, 25 ("God is a spirit: and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth") does not forbid the legitimate use of material things as means of raising the human mind to God. Otherwise we should have to burn our Bibles!

(c) In Acts 17, 25 St. Paul, preaching to the Athenians, protests against the pagan idea that God "is served by men's hands, as though he needed anything." Assuredly God does not need anything, but men need a lot of things. It is the human need of images as reminders of those whom they represent that provides a living for every photographer—and also for every religious artist from Bézalel and Oholiab, "in whose heart the Lord had put wisdom" (Exod. 36, 2), to Harry Clarke and Evie Hone.

(d) If I Cor. 10, 19-20 ("Is an idol anything?") condemns Catholics for praying before the Crucifix, it also condemns the Jews for "looking into the serpent of brass" when they were dying of snake-bite. Yet it was God Himself Who had said to Moses: "Make thyself a fiery serpent and set it on a standard: and it shall come to pass that everyone who is bitten, when he seeth it, shall live" (Num. 1, 6-9).

THE BIBLE

N.U.P. Questions

- (1) *What position do the Holy Scriptures hold in your Church?*
- (2) *Why has your Church banned, even burned, the Holy Scriptures in many parts of the world?*

Our Answers

(1) The position of the Holy Scriptures in the Catholic Church is that they are one of the two primary sources of God's revelation to men, the other being Tradition. Catholics believe that the Holy Scriptures have God for their author and that, therefore, every word in them is true. As *truth cannot contradict truth*, nothing in Tradition can contradict what is in Holy Scripture. If there is an apparent contradiction, it arises from misunderstanding either of the text of Holy Scripture or the teaching of Tradition. Protestants seem frequently to misunderstand the teaching of Tradition either because they read Catholic booklets without a proper knowledge of the background of Catholic teaching, familiar to Catholics, which puts what they read in its proper setting; or because they mistake for the official and infallible teaching of the Church some statement of Catholic private opinion. Even the Pope's private opinion is not infallible and must not be taken as a sure indication of Catholic belief. Where the text of Holy Scripture is obscure, Catholics may use their private judgment to interpret it, but they must not interpret it in any way contrary to the official teaching of the Church; again, because *truth cannot*

contradict truth. Catholics are encouraged to read the Holy Scriptures, but unauthorised versions are forbidden.

According to the N.U.P., Rome "has continually tried to destroy the Word of God since the glorious Reformation" (*Questions*, p.10). Here on the other hand is a passage from Pope Pius XII's Letter on Biblical Studies (September 30, 1943) :

"Let Bishops take every measure to foster and increase veneration for Holy Scripture among the faithful committed to their charge . . . Let them favour and assist those religious societies whose object is to circulate copies of the Bible, and especially of the Gospels, among the faithful and to encourage Christian families in the habit of reading them devoutly every day."

(2) The reading of the Holy Scripture is never forbidden by the Church provided that two conditions are guaranteed: that the text is genuine; that in vernacular versions safeguards against misinterpretations are provided in notes. It is the duty of bishops to certify that these conditions are observed. Bibles printed without this certificate are forbidden, because there is no guarantee that they would not spread error as well as truth. The Church has never burned Bibles as an act of disrespect to God's Word which is in every version of the Holy Scriptures, but Bibles in which there was a large proportion of obvious error, due to mistranslation or defective manuscripts, may have been disposed of in this way, in order to prevent the further spread of error contained in them. The preface to the Protestant Revised Version says that the Authorised Version was "founded for the most part on manuscripts of late date, few in number and used with little critical skill"; that the translators "adopted a variety of expressions which would now be deemed hardly consistent with the requirements of a faithful translation"; that it renders God's word in beautiful English, but with only "general accuracy"; that it contained "many inconsistencies" and that in view of the haste with which the work of translating was done "we may wonder that the incongruities which remain are not more numerous." If an official

Protestant body of such high standing as the Revisers appointed under the Resolutions of the Convocation of Canterbury, May 3, and 5, 1870, found such defects in that version of the Holy Scriptures used by English-speaking Protestants for nearly three centuries, it cannot be denied that the faults were there, and it cannot be wondered at if Catholics took a poor view of the version of the Bible which admittedly contained them. Dr. J. B. Lightfoot, Hulsean Professor of Divinity at Cambridge University, in his book *On a Fresh Revision of the New Testament*, has a list *one hundred and sixty-six pages long* headed "Errors and Defects" which he finds in the Protestant Authorised Version. Some of his sub-headings are: "False Readings," "Distinctions Created," "Distinctions Obliterated," "Ambiguities" and so on. He was only one of many Protestant scholars and divines whose well-founded criticisms of the Authorised Version of the Bible at long last persuaded the Church of England to produce a new and better version. This Revised Version has been before the Protestant public for nearly sixty years, yet the Authorised Version, with all its faults, seems to retain its popularity. If Protestants were told the truth about the Authorised Version's numerous defects, they would not be surprised that the Catholic Church does not acknowledge it as the "pure and unadulterated Word of God."

THE BLESSED VIRGIN

N.U.P. Questions

- (1) *Can a member of your Church obtain salvation without ever praying to Mary or seeking her aid?*
- (2) *What power has Mary according to your Church and is there any power given to her according to the Scriptures; and if so, what is it?*

Our Answers

- (1) A Catholic *can* obtain salvation without ever praying to Mary or seeking her aid, provided he believes in the Church's teaching that prayer to Mary is permitted and praiseworthy.

In practice, however, a Catholic who believes that Mary is "blessed among women" (Luke 1, 42) and who knows what those words imply will not fail to venerate her and to ask her to pray to her Divine Son on his behalf unless his love of the Son also is feeble and faltering. What opinion should we form of a man who professed loyalty and devotion to the King of his country but who disregarded or ignored the King's mother?

It is widely believed in the Church, though it is not defined as infallible doctrine, that Mary prays for all for whom her Son died, and that all who are saved obtain salvation with the help of her prayers, even though they may not pray to her. This would certainly apply to Protestants who honestly believe that prayer to Mary is wrong; she prays for them all the same.

(2) The Catholic doctrine on the power of Mary is that it is nothing more or less than the power of her prayers. Therefore the Church's prayer to Mary is: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen." We do not ask her to pardon us sinners, for only God can pardon us. We believe that, because of her close relationship with our Saviour and because of her outstanding personal holiness, her prayers fulfil the conditions of perfect prayer laid down in the Scriptures, as the prayers of no Christian fulfil them. Catholics, therefore, ask Mary to pray for them in all their needs of soul and body, not because they doubt the power and mercy and loving-kindness of God, but because they humbly acknowledge the imperfect fulfilment by themselves of the conditions of prayer, such as faith, trust, perseverance, humility.

It is on this account that St. Alphonsus Liguori declares that "we shall sometimes be more quickly heard and saved" by praying to Mary than by praying directly to Christ. This and similar sentences from St. Alphonsus's book, *The Glories of Mary*, are often quoted, without reference to the original contexts, against the Catholic practice of venerating the Virgin Mary, as though they proved that we attribute to her a power superior to that of Christ (cf. N.U.P. Questions, p.8). But

St. Alphonsus himself expressly provides against any such misunderstanding of his teaching. "Not," he writes, "as if Mary were more powerful than her Son to save us, for we know that Jesus is our only Saviour and that He alone by His merits has obtained and obtains salvation for us. But when we have recourse to Jesus and remember that He is also our Judge Who must punish ungrateful sinners, we may fail to have the confidence which is necessary for us in order to be heard. But Mary, the mother of mercy, has no other task than to compassionate us; Mary, our advocate, has no other task than to defend us. Accordingly, when we go to her, our confidence may be increased and strengthened" (*Glories of Mary*, I, cap. iv; italics ours).

That Mary did effectively intercede with her Son on earth to obtain for others a favour which He was not at first disposed to grant is clear from the story of the marriage-feast at Cana (John 2, 1-11). Those who assert that she lost that power when she went to Heaven have no Scripture to prove their assertion.

SUNDAY

N.U.P. Questions

- (1) What is your Church's attitude to keeping holy the Lord's Day?
- (2) Why does your Sunday terminate at 12 noon, and what Scripture have you for this?

Our Answers

(1) The Catholic Church insists that the Lord's Day should be kept holy. All Catholics must attend Mass on that day and are recommended to attend evening service as well. Religious booklets and papers are put on sale in our Irish Churches—in some dioceses they are sold at a loss, the deficit being made up out of the diocesan fund—so that people may be induced to give some time to religious reading on Sunday.

Indulgence in a reasonable amount of suitable recreation is

not regarded by the Church as contravening the sanctity of the Lord's Day. In Ireland, Sunday "horse-racing, greyhound racing, whippet racing, coursing, or any sports which include one or other of these" are prohibited (Maynooth Synod 1927, statute 333). The reason is that most people who take part in these highly commercialised pastimes have an eye on making money out of the events as well as of enjoying themselves. This is not true of the majority of those who go to Sunday dances, cinema-shows or football matches, especially amateur ones. Indeed, many people, especially in country places, would be deprived of these pastimes altogether if they were forbidden to go to them on Sundays. The only result of such a prohibition would be to drive them to other and perhaps less innocent pastimes behind closed doors. The Catholic Church is nothing if not practical. She does not need to be told that it is a noble Christian ideal to devote the whole of the Sunday to prayer and worship; but she also knows that if you ask too much of ordinary men and women you may end by getting nothing.

(2) Our Sunday does not terminate at 12 noon but at 12 midnight.

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