

Roman Catholicism By Lorraine Boettner

Chapter XVII By What Moral Standard?

This is the continuation of Dr. Boettner's book, *Roman Catholicism* and the next chapter after [Chapter XVI The Parochial School](#)

1. Basic Principles

One of the strong contrasts between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism is found in the moral codes which distinguish the two systems. In Protestantism this code is taken directly from the Bible. Nothing can be laid on men as a moral requirement unless it can be shown to be contained in the Bible. Such requirements thereby become a matter of conscience for the Christian.

But in Roman Catholicism the moral code is based primarily on Canon Law and only secondarily on the Bible, and in the main is imposed on the person from without. The authority of the church as interpreted by the priest is what counts. The result is that the Roman Church has developed a standard of morality that is designed, not to stir the conscience, but to maintain papal power. Many of the dogmas and rites of Romanism are antagonistic to the teachings of Scripture and directly or indirectly conducive to immorality. Drinking, gambling, and other habits considered as vices by Protestants are not counted as evil by Romanists except when indulged in to excess.

In the study of morals the Roman Church takes the teachings of the theologian Alphonsus Liguori as authoritative. Liguori was canonized among the saints in heaven by the pronouncement of Pope Gregory XVI, in 1839, and was declared a doctor of the universal Roman Church by Pope Pius IX. Thomas Carlyle, the famous British author, who said that the Jesuits had "poisoned the well springs of truth," wrote concerning Liguori:

"More terrible still is the 'moral theology' of Alphonsus Liguori, who is counted a saint and 'doctor' of the Church—of equal rank with Augustine, Chrysostom and others—whose textbooks are standard on moral questions in all Roman Catholic seminaries. The 'moral' teachings of Liguori, if they could be read in their original Latin, would fill every right-minded person with horror. For there he outlines the ways in which *falsehood* can be used *without really telling a lie*; the ways in which *the property of others can be taken without stealing* how the *Ten Commandments can be broken without committing deadly sin.*"

Samples of Liguori's "moral" teaching are:

"A servant is allowed to help his master to climb a window to commit fornication" (St. Alphonsus, 1, 22, 66).

"It is not a mortal sin to get drunk, unless one loses completely the use of his mental faculties for over one hour" (1, 5, 75).

"It is lawful to violate penal laws" [hunting, fishing, etc.].

"It is asked whether prostitutes are to be permitted. ... They are to be permitted because, as a distinguished priest says, 'Remove prostitutes from the world, and all things will be disordered with lust.' Hence in large cities, prostitutes may be permitted" (3, 434).

In this connection it is interesting to note that legalized prostitution was not abolished in the city of Rome, the very city which is headquarters of the Roman Church, until September, 1958, and that even today almost every city of any size in South America has its legalized houses of prostitution. Dr. Walter Montano, returning from a conference of Protestant leaders in Colombia, reported that, according to information given him, the city of Cali, which has a population of 520,000, has 2,600 houses of prostitution and 13,000 registered prostitutes. He adds that the Roman Catholic Church in that country has done practically nothing to lift the morality of the people or to bring a solution to the country's problems (*Christian Heritage*, February, 1960).

Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556), another famous teacher in the Roman Church and founder of the Jesuit order which today so largely controls Roman Catholic policy, wrote some rules for his order which he commended as conducive to complete obedience and as a "help in attaining the right attitude toward the Church." One of them reads:

"Laying aside all private judgment the spirit must be always ready to obey the true doctrine and therefore, *if anything shall appear white to our eyes which the Church has defined as black, we likewise must declare it to be black.* ... If you receive from your superior a command which appears to go against your own judgment, your own conviction, or your own well-being, then you must fall on your knees, putting off all human principles and considerations and renew, when you are alone, your vow of obedience."

In accordance with this it is not uncommon in the Roman church to refer to one as a "good priest" if he does his work efficiently, even though it may be known that his moral character is bad. He is a "good priest" in the same sense that one may be a "good doctor," or a "good mechanic," entirely apart from his moral character. Under such a standard obedience to the church becomes the supreme virtue and takes precedence even over conscience. But for the Protestant such action does not make sense. The Protestant can not force his will to believe that which he knows to be irrational, nor his conscience to approve that which he knows to be wrong.

2 Liquor

We do not need to belabor the point that the Roman Catholic Church fights almost every movement throughout the nation that is designed to restrict the use of alcoholic liquors. The big cities, in which the Roman Catholic population is concentrated, are notoriously "wet." The three things that appeal most to the weakness of human nature and that bring large profits to those who control them, are drinking, gambling, and prostitution. Protestants are often regarded as "killjoys," because they oppose even a limited license

for any of these. The Roman Church, however, holds that drinking and gambling are not sinful in themselves, but that they become so only when carried to excess. And who is to say at what point they become excessive? Why, the priest, of course. It is he who, in the confessional, decides for Roman Catholics at what point a man or woman is to be considered as drinking to excess, and how much may be spent on gambling without committing a sin.

A case in point occurred in Steubenville, Ohio, in the fall of 1946. It was public knowledge that drunkenness, gambling, and prostitution were rampant in that city and that a "clean up" was needed. A group of Protestant ministers undertook the job. But the Roman Catholic bishop openly opposed the cleanup and issued a pastoral letter to be read in all of his churches, condemning the campaign of the ministers. According to The New York Times of November 28, of that year, the bishop called the ministers "narrow little people," and declared that "Drinking and gambling are not in themselves sinful or evil." The bishop then proceeded to lecture the ministers on the proper interpretation of the Christian moral code as follows: "These so-called leaders simply do not know the moral structure of Christianity. As a result they make themselves pitiable objects in a community." A Steubenville judge, apparently under the bishop's influence, backed him up and condemned the ministers as "fanatics insistent upon senseless arrests" (L. H. Lehmann, booklet, *The Secret of Catholic Power*, p. 7).

We have called attention to the De La Salle Institute, at Napa, California, which is only one of several church owned properties in the United States producing commercial wine or brandy or both.

3 Oaths

According to Liguori, a Roman Catholic can lie. Says he:

"Notwithstanding, indeed, although it is not lawful to lie, or to feign what is not, however, it is lawful to dissemble what is, or to cover the truth with words, or other ambiguous and doubtful signs, for a just cause, and when there is not a necessity for confessing. These things being settled, it is a certain and a common opinion among all divines, that for a just cause it is lawful to use equivocation in the modes propounded and to confirm it [equivocation] with an oath" (Less. 1, 2, c. 41). The right to hold a "mental reservation" is claimed by Roman theologians. The *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas, on which Roman theology relies so heavily, says that when the interests of Holy Mother Church require it, one may make a statement while holding a mental reservation which qualifies it into nullity.

The *Roman Catholic Dictionary*, 15th edition, published in London, in 1951, with the imprimatur of the cardinal of Westminster, under the subject Oath, says that the Roman Church has the right to dispense anyone from the provision of an oath: "Though generally speaking, no earthly power can dispense from keeping an oath made in favor of another, still in other cases a dispensation may be valid.

"Under Canon Law 1320 the pope can dispense from any oath (see the authoritative book, *Canon Law: Text and Commentary* [1946], by Bouscaren and

Ellis, p. 679). A Roman Catholic judge who obtains a papal dispensation in order to violate his judicial oath in case of conflict between church law and civil law is considered blameless by the Roman Catholic theologians. The most notable examples of papal release from oaths were the attempt of Pope Pius V, in 1570, to "uncrown" Protestant Queen Elizabeth I, of England, by releasing her court officials and all subjects from civil allegiance to her—which attempt failed because the British people in the main remained loyal to their queen—and the attempt of Pope Gregory VII to depose Henry IV of Germany, which attempt succeeded to the extent that Henry was forced to do obeisance to the pope, although he later regained his power and drove the pope out of Rome.

The principle to which the Roman Church resorts in freeing men from their oaths is that it does so in obedience to a "higher law." On the grounds that no man can justly bind himself to do that which is sinful, the church may decide that an oath of allegiance to a ruler who is disobedient to the pope, or a pledge made to a "heretic," is sinful and need not be kept.

It is Roman Catholic doctrine that the conscience is subject to the teaching of the church and is to be determined by that teaching rather than by private judgment. A pledge made during a political campaign, or an oath of office, is secondary to Canon Law. A Roman candidate for office may declare himself in favor of separation of church and state, or against federal and state aid to parochial schools. But even though he does so in all good conscience, the Roman Church teaches that in the final analysis his conscience must be governed by and be subject to its authority.

Edwin F. Healy, in his book, *Moral Guidance*, published by the Loyola University Press, declares: "A promise under oath to do something sinful does not bind at all." The Roman Church sets itself up as the judge to determine what things are sinful; hence an oath to perform some action that is later judged to be against the best interests of that church may be abrogated by a Roman Catholic office holder. What the church holds to be right, e.g., things which promote its welfare, restrict heretics, etc., are judged to be right. When personal judgment of conscience conflicts with the dictates of the church, personal judgment must be set aside. We have seen this principle set forth by Loyola for the members of his Jesuit order. The same general principle holds throughout the Roman Church.

Under the subject of mental reservation Healy says:

"For sufficient reason we may thus permit others to deceive themselves by taking the wrong meaning of what is said; and this remains true though the listener, because of his ignorance, does not know that there is another meaning to the word that is employed."

In other words, a Roman Catholic is not necessarily bound to the strict form of the words spoken. If the person to whom a promise is made, or before whom an oath is taken, does not know that the one making it may attach a different meaning to the words, that is his fault, and the promise or oath is not necessarily binding.

4 Theft

In regard to theft, Liguori teaches that a Roman Catholic may steal, provided the value of the thing stolen is not excessive. He says:

"If any one on an occasion should steal only a moderate sum either from one or more, not intending to acquire any notable sum, neither to injure his neighbor to any great extent, by several thefts, he does not sin grievously, nor do those, taken together, constitute a mortal sin. However, after it may have amounted to a notable sum by detaining it, he can commit mortal sin, but even this mortal sin may be avoided, if either then he be unable to restore, or have the intention of making restitution immediately of those things which he then received" (Vol. 3, p. 258).

This doctrine has been interpreted for American Roman Catholics to mean that it is not a mortal sin if one steals less than \$40.00 worth at any one time. Msgr. Francis J. Connell writes as follows in *The American Ecclesiastical Review*, official magazine of instruction for priests, published at Catholic University, Washington, D.C.

"Question: What would be regarded nowadays as the absolute sum for grave theft in the United States?

"Answer: By the absolute sum for grave theft is meant that amount of money, the stealing of which constitutes a mortal sin, irrespective of the financial status of the individual or corporation from which it is taken, however wealthy they may be. Naturally this sum varies with the fluctuation of the value, or the purchasing power, of money. In a country like ours it is quite possible that this sum might be different in different sections. To lay down a general norm, in view of actual conditions and the value of money, it would seem that the absolute sum for grave theft would be about \$40.00" (January, 1945, p. 68).

The condoning of theft and robbery under certain circumstances is known among Roman Catholic theologians as "secret compensation," and is contained in catechisms and textbooks used in Roman Catholic schools. In *The Manual of Christian Doctrine*, which has gone through many editions, and which bears the nihil obstat of M. S. Fisher, S.T.L., *censor librorum*, and the imprimatur of Cardinal Dougherty of Philadelphia, the Preface states: "This book is intended as a manual of religious instruction not only in the novitiate and scholasticate of teaching congregations, but also in the classes of high schools, academies and colleges." On page 295 this textbook discusses the problem of theft, its nature and various forms, including larceny, robbery, cheating, fraud, and extortion, and on page 297 we find theft condoned in the following words:

"Q. What are the causes that excuse from theft?

"A. 1. *Extreme necessity*, when a person takes only what is necessary, and does not thereby reduce to the same necessity the person whose property he takes.

2. *Secret compensation*, on condition that the debt so cancelled be certain that the creditor cannot recover his property by any other means, and that he take as far as possible, things of the same kind as he had given."

L. H. Lehmann comments very appropriately on such conduct:

"Moral conduct can be no better than the moral principles upon which it is based. Most crimes are distinctly connected with thievery and robbery. If a Roman Catholic youth, for instance, can persuade himself that he has 'extreme necessity' for an automobile, he will consider himself justified in stealing it legitimately according to the above teaching, provided he knows that the owner will not be thereby impoverished. The doctrine of 'secret compensation' applies mostly to employees who consider they are being underpaid for their labor. A twenty-dollar-a-week cashier in a side street cafeteria may consider herself underpaid and apply this principle to justify her pilfering of odd dimes and quarters from the cash register whenever she can safely do so. Many a cashier in a large bank or commercial business corporation has done just this until he found himself in jail for large-scale embezzlement. A desperate man could also easily argue himself into thinking that he is justly entitled to some of the surplus money of a rich victim and will go after it with a gun. Likewise grafting politicians seize upon the argument implicit in this teaching to justify their conviction that they are worth much more to the community than their elected offices pay them. [And it surely does not take much imagination to guess how this principle might be applied by judges and clerks whose duty it is to count votes at the polling places. Just how many votes might be stolen in order to aid one's candidate without committing mortal sin? We should like to know.]

"This doctrine of 'secret compensation' was, of course, unheard of in Christianity, even in the Catholic Church, prior to the Jesuit casuists of the seventeenth century. It was invented by them along with other unethical doctrines such as 'mental reservation,' 'the end justifies the means,' 'the end sanctifies the means,' etc., to make Catholicism popular among the masses. It also helped to rationalize their own exploits. Thus Catholic textbooks of moral theology today make no pretention of showing that these principles of conduct take their origin from the Ten Commandments or from Christian revelation. They merely propound them as accepted Catholic doctrine and trace them back to Gury, the Jesuit fountainhead. ...

"The blunt fact, confirmed by countless cases, is that many Catholics get the one idea from this teaching, namely that stealing is not essentially evil at all times, but, on the contrary, fair and reasonable if one needs something badly enough and the owner does not. How this conviction can be stretched to cover untold cases is easy to imagine. It is limited only by the envy and self-prejudice of the individual circumstances—which varies immeasurably from person to person.

"All in all, it is most unfortunate that any religion is permitted to teach such a principle as part of the curriculum of American school education, much more if it should ever be taught in the public schools on the pretext of helping to lessen crime among the youth of America" (booklet, Catholic Education and Crime).

5 Gambling

Another very serious defect in the moral armor of Roman Catholicism is its penchant for games of chance, particularly its strong defense of bingo as played in the churches, which, in whatever light it may be viewed, is a form of gambling. The primary feature about gambling, bingo, raffles, etc., is that each is a game of chance in which the ownership of money or some other article of value is decided by a lucky number, a turn of a wheel, a throw of the dice, or some such device. And gambling is gambling, no matter what form it takes. Basically, it is an attempt to get something for nothing, an attempt to live not by honest toil but at the expense of others. As such it is a moral disease, a covetous greed or lust to get possession of what another has. Just because other equally covetous people agree to the arrangement does not make it moral. Even when a gambler wins he realizes that others have lost. Anything that induces people to take money needed for food and clothing and risk it on games of chance is wrong in principle. And the "easy come, easy go" principle involved seldom leaves anyone permanently enriched. It is notorious that gamblers almost invariably end up broke. And usually bingo, under the guise of charity for a church or school, is an opening wedge for the more professional types of gambling. But whether gambling takes the form of bingo, raffles, lucky numbers, or the more outright forms with dice, cards, or roulette, it surely is unworthy of a Christian, who should always be ready to give a comparable value in return for what he seeks.

The fact that the article may not be of great value, and that the "chances" cost only a few cents each, does not change the principle involved, nor make it right to participate. The principle is the same and the practice is sinful whether one gambles for thousands of dollars at roulette or whether he participates in the raffle of a \$1 box of candy for "chances" sold at 5 cents each. Sin remains sin, whether committed outside the church or inside. The righteous robes of religion do not cover it up in the sight of God.

Historically, organized gambling has meant organized crime. Recently a top federal prosecutor, Malcolm Anderson, assistant U. S. attorney general in charge of the criminal division of the Justice Department, speaking before the National Association of Attorneys General, declared that gambling is the life-blood of organized crime, and that if gambling could be wiped out syndicated crime would die for lack of sustenance. Organized gambling flourishes in a twilight zone of society where the muscle man is boss and where threats, coercion, and corruption are the methods of doing business. An evil atmosphere envelopes such a community and eats into the fabric of law and order. Bribery and corruption of officials with attendant social abuses is a common result. Yet the Roman Church, which receives substantial revenues from gambling games, has not only failed to oppose legalized gambling but frequently has itself run afoul of state anti-gambling laws. On the other hand Protestant groups, which believe that it is a sin to gamble, have taken the lead in a great many places and have succeeded in having bingo, and particularly professional gambling, outlawed. In the bingo-pinball devices commonly found in taverns, the millions of nickels flow into millions of dollars. Usually these devices return the tavern owners 50 percent of the

take, and the operators greedily reach for the profits. So the foundation for the underworld is built.

Gambling is a violation of one of God's first commands to man: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" (Genesis 3:19). It is also a violation of other Scripture commands and of the general spirit of Scripture teaching: "Thou shalt not steal" (Exodus 20:15); "Thou shalt not covet" (Exodus 20:17); "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matthew 19:19); "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not?" (Isaiah 55:2). "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31); etc.

The ideal constantly held before us in Scripture is that we should earn our property by honest labor and fair exchange. To try to give gambling an aura of respectability, and even a certain kind of spirituality through church sponsorship, is at once a sign of spiritual degeneration and of abysmal ignorance or deliberate disregard of what the Scriptures really teach.

In 1958 the state of New York legalized bingo by a constitutional amendment, primarily because of pressure brought to bear by the Roman Catholic Church and a few other groups. A news dispatch from Albany, New York, May 31, 1960, reported that New York residents had spent more than 40 million dollars playing bingo since the game was legalized. It added that the state lottery control commission reported that of that total, 29 million was returned to the players in the form of prizes and that the non-profit sponsoring organizations retained 9 million.¹

¹ In the year 1966 the gross from bingo in New York State was mere than 93 million dollars, with 53 million returned to the players and 24 million profit to the sponsoring organizations.

Bingo is illegal in Pennsylvania. Interestingly enough, the magazine Church and State, April, 1960, carried this report: "Philadelphia police have stepped up their campaign against bingo games in Roman Catholic churches. Latest to feel the hand of the law were St. Agatha's and Church of the Gesu. ... St. Agatha's budget is \$90,000 a year; \$50,000 has come from bingo." Interesting, too, is the fact that Pennsylvania's long ban on legalized gambling was broken in December, 1959, when the Roman Catholic governor signed a bill which permitted betting on harness races, subject to county option. An outright ban on bingo-pinball in Ohio was upheld by the United States Supreme Court in 1958. And the United States Post Office Department has ruled that the game of bingo is a lottery and that as such it cannot be promoted through the mails. The mailing of periodicals or circulars containing advance notice of lotteries is banned under postal regulations. Postal officials have ruled that bingo has all the classic elements of a game of chance as set forth in the Supreme Court's lottery definition, and, though legal in some states, the state laws do not affect the federal laws under which the department operates.

If there ever was a travesty on the Christian religion it is that of a church raising money by encouraging its people to engage in a form of gambling. Such practice cannot give stability to a church, and the effect on its spiritual

and educational program is bound to be detrimental. Morally it is no better than was the sale of indulgences during the Middle Ages, which was one of the religious corruptions that brought about the Protestant Reformation.

6 The Roman Church and the U. S. Prison Population

When we mention prison statistics it must be acknowledged, of course, that men and women in all denominations occasionally go wrong, that no denomination is above criticism, and that good and bad people are found in all denominations. There are, however, certain points of contrast between the Roman and the Protestant churches, points which, we believe, arise primarily because of their different moral codes.

Various studies indicate that of the white prison population Roman Catholics constitute a higher percentage than do those of any other church operating on the American scene, and that while the Roman Catholic percentage in the general population is about 22 percent, their percentage in the jails and penitentiaries and in juvenile delinquency is approximately twice that.

An examination of the crime records of any large city in the United States shows that the gangster type criminal turns out with surprising frequency to be Roman Catholic or to have a Roman Catholic background. The Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Correction of the State of New York, for the years 1940 through 1946, shows that a consistent 50 percent of the criminals committed to New York's two largest prisons, Sing Sing and Dannemora, year after year, were Roman Catholic, while the Roman Catholic population in the state was approximately 27 percent. An analysis of criminal records in Sing Sing, which was made by a Roman Catholic chaplain and published in the magazine *Commonweal*, December 14, 1932, revealed that of a total of 1,581 prisoners no less than 855 were Roman Catholics.

Emmett McLoughlin says concerning his work in Phoenix, Arizona:

"As chaplain of the local jail, I was shocked at the percentage of Roman Catholics among the unwilling guests. Wondering if the same incidence prevailed in other jails and penitentiaries, I found a study written by a Franciscan, the Roman Catholic chaplain of Joliet Penitentiary in Illinois. He discovered that the Catholic percentage among prisoners in America is about twice their percentage in the total population.

"If the Roman Catholic Church is the mother of learning and of holiness, how could this be? Priests answer that these prisoners and gangsters do not represent American Catholicism but mostly Irish, Polish, Italian, Spanish, and Mexican—unfortunate immigrants from backward countries. This is the stock answer to the question of Roman Catholic crime and illiteracy in America. It will be found routinely in the 'question boxes' of the hierarchy's publications" (*People's Padre*, p. 86).

We would point out that the countries mentioned in the above paragraph are Roman Catholic countries par excellence, that for centuries they have been almost exclusively Roman Catholic, and that they are precisely the countries in which we expect to find the true fruits of Romanism.

Paul Blanshard, in another bestseller, his well documented *American Freedom and Catholic Power*, says that the Roman Catholic Church as a denomination "has the highest proportion of white criminals in our American prisons of any denomination" (p. 105). And in a footnote he says:

"This has been established by many studies of crime and juvenile delinquency, but it would be wrong to say that Catholicism is primarily responsible. Poverty and bad housing affect the lives of Catholic workers as well as others in our large cities. ... Catholic pre-eminence in the field of crime and juvenile delinquency is notable in our northern cities, especially in New York. A study, *Crime and Religion*, by Father Leo Kalmer, Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago, 1936, showed that the rate of Catholic criminals committed to prisons in forty-eight states was about twice that of the Catholic proportion in the population. See Leo H. Lehmann, *The Catholic Church and Public Schools*, Agora Publishing Co. Bishop Gallagher of Detroit declared in 1936, according to *The New York Times* of December 8, 1936, 'It is a matter of serious reproach to the Church that more Catholic boys in proportion to the total number, get into trouble than those of any other denomination. One fifth of the people of Michigan are Catholics, but 50 percent of the boys in the Industrial School for Boys at Lansing are Catholics.'"

The New York Times, March 13, 1947, published an amazing admission by bishop John F. Noll, of Fort Wayne, Indiana, as given before the National Catholic Conference on Family Life, in Chicago the previous day. In this "chastening" confession, as the Times called it, this crusading bishop of the Roman hierarchy acknowledged that "Nearly all the evils of society prevail where we [Roman Catholics] live, and not where Protestants live," that Roman Catholics are concentrated largely in the big cities of America where they constitute from one third to two thirds of the population, while the rural communities "where family life is most wholesome," are "eighty percent Protestant." He said:

There are only 7,000,000 members of Protestant churches in the fifty biggest cities of the country, but 20,000,000 Catholics. Eighty percent of Protestantism is rural. And it is in rural America where family life is most wholesome and where the divorce rate is still low. On the other hand, where the bulk of Catholics live, one half of the marriages end in divorce. It is where they live that the big motion picture houses are located, the filthy magazine racks, the taverns and the gambling halls."

Arthur Tenorio, staff psychologist of the New Mexico Boy's School, reports that 85 percent of the boys committed to that institution are of Spanish-American background, and that 71 percent are Roman Catholics, while only 41 percent of the state's total population is Roman Catholic (*Christian Century*, September 4, 1957).

In Britain the *Sunday Times* recently dealt with the subject of crime and its causes. An article declared frankly that "In this country [England] Roman Catholics, who have the most intensive religious training, have also the highest delinquency rates." To support that statement it was pointed out that the proportion of Roman Catholics population-wise was no more than ten percent, but that the proportion in boys' Borstal institutions of correction

was 23 percent, and in Holloway prison about 26 percent. It was further declared that during the war delinquency rates among Roman Catholics were approximately twice as high among those of other faiths, and that in Scotland in 1957 the 15 percent of Roman Catholics in the population provided 35 percent of those committed to Borstal institutions, and 40 percent of those committed to prison.

Chief among the devices used by the Roman Catholic Church in its policy of isolating its youth from childhood contacts with non-Catholics is the parochial school. In order to justify in the eyes of Roman Catholics the necessity for supporting these "hothouses of Catholicism," as they have been appropriately called, the Roman hierarchy condemns as godless the public school system which makes no distinction of race or creed. Surely the above statistics are at one and the same time a cause for alarm and a grave indictment of Roman Catholic education. They should be seriously considered by the Protestant people of this nation who are constantly being called upon to provide more and more support, through taxation and government handouts, for these Roman schools. Here we have a church making pretentious and bigoted claims about being "the only true church," yet turning out a product that is responsible for approximately twice its proportionate share of juvenile delinquency and adult crime. Tolerant Americans would like to avoid this subject. No one likes to connect crime with a specific system of church training. Yet if it could be proved that crime is more prevalent, say, among the Presbyterians, or Baptists, or Methodists proportionately than among other religious groups, certainly the Roman Catholic authorities would not hesitate to point out that fact and to use it in justification of their church and their schools. But since the facts are so clear we should not hesitate to question the value of the parochial school, and to insist that the Roman Church must stand responsible for the influence that it exerts. And surely the above facts should make any open-minded Roman Catholic want to inquire more carefully into the real nature of his church and the effect that it is having on society at large.

We must point out that the Mafia, probably the most notorious of all crime organizations, had its origin hundreds of years ago in Italy where for centuries the Roman Catholic Church almost exclusively has provided the religious background. It originated in Sicily in the late 13th century, as a semi-vigilante, semi-patriotic organization, designed to free Italy from French rule. Its rallying cry was: "Death to the French is Italy's Cry!" In Italian the words were: *Morte Alla Francia Italia Anela!*, and the initials of these words spell MAFIA.

With the passage of time the Mafia became a secret criminal organization, preying on its own countrymen, specializing in murder, robbery, extortion, blackmail, and arson. It turned up in the United States as early as 1860, but not until the end of the century did it become a serious threat in this country. It found easy entrance because of the extremely lax immigration laws which made little effort to strain out criminal elements. It spread across the country from New York to California, being centered primarily in the big cities, working through organized gangs, and specializing in big money crime, such as narcotics, gambling, prostitution, bootlegging, murder, and robbery.

In 1959 a book, *Brotherhood of Evil*, by Frederic Sondern, Jr., was published which goes into considerable detail concerning its origin, history, international workings, and recent activities.

The recent Senate crime investigation committee, headed by Senator McClellan, of Arkansas, and the earlier committee, headed by Senator Kefauver, of Tennessee, sought to show that the Mafia was the main support of organized crime in the United States. With a monotonous regularity the witnesses who were called for questioning turned out to be Italians of Roman Catholic background.

The underworld convention which met at Appalachin, New York, November 14, 1957, was alleged to have Mafia connections and resulted in an intense drive by law enforcement officials to suppress that organization. A lengthy editorial in the *Kansas City Times*, December 16, 1959, gave some interesting facts concerning that meeting. Among other things it said:

"A singular fact about the 60 men surprised at what turned out to be the best publicized barbecue in history is that all were of Southern Italian birth and ancestry, most of them Sicilian... the royalty of the underworld. Chief among the Mafia leaders who gathered at Joe Barbara's \$150,000 mountain top mansion that fateful November day was the recognized leader of vice and corruption in the United States, Vito Genovese, whose Mafia title is Don Vitone. As far back as 1939 he was dubbed 'King of the Rackets' by Thomas E. Dewey, former New York governor."

Emmett McLoughlin remarks concerning the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church toward the Mafia:

"Its leaders, the cardinals and bishops, are conspicuously silent in the face of the Roman Catholic Sicilian Mafia's complete defiance of decency and morals in the promotion of prostitution, narcotics, gambling, and labor racketeering in America. The same bishops and archbishops who vociferously condemn a young Catholic girl for entering a beauty contest say nothing about the traffic in narcotics and whoredom so long as good Catholics run the business" (*American Culture and Catholic Schools*, p. 232; 1960; Lyle Stuart, publisher; New York).

Prominent with Mafia or similar gangland connections have been the very royalty of the underworld, such as Al Capone, Lucky Luciano, Joe Adonia, Albert Anastasia, Frank Costello, Frank Scalise, and others. The fact stands out clearly that the worst criminal element that we have received from any nation during the past several decades has come from Italy, and that the religious background of those men has been Roman Catholic. We have never had a comparable group from England, or Scotland, or Holland, or any other Protestant nation. Another editorial in the *Kansas City Times* made this comment:

"In the last 15 years nearly a thousand Italian born 'unwanted' have been shipped back to their native land since the attorney general undertook to rid the United States of dope peddlers and an endless variety of thugs associated with the Mafia" (September 25, 1959).

Supporting this contention that in hundreds of years with practically no Protestant competition Roman Catholicism has failed to raise the moral and spiritual standards of the Italian nation is the testimony of Stephen L. Testa, himself a former Roman Catholic of Italian birth. He says:

"We see that in a population 96% Roman Catholic, the percentage of crime and illiteracy is very high. In Naples, for instance, filthy language, blasphemy, cursing, and lying is very prevalent among the populace, and so is drinking, gambling, thieving and low morals. Yet they attend mass, go to confession, wear scapulars and religious medals around their necks and pray to images in their homes. The Church has had them for hundreds of years and it has not benefited them in the least. On the other hand those who are converted to Protestantism immediately abandon those vices and sins and live cleaner lives. They are completely changed, they are 'born again,' and are new creatures in Christ. The idea of salvation is different in the two religions" (booklet, *The Truth About Catholics, Protestants, and Jews*, p. 31).

Another series of events to which we must call attention, which surely cannot be pure coincidence, is that of the assassination of three presidents of the United States, all three of whom were killed by Roman Catholics educated in parochial schools: Lincoln, by John Wilkes Booth; Garfield, by Charles J. Guiteau; and McKinley, by Leon Czolgosz. Theodore Roosevelt was shot and wounded by a Roman Catholic in Milwaukee, while a candidate for president in 1912. In Florida a Roman Catholic shot at Franklin Roosevelt, then president elect, missed him, but killed the mayor of Chicago who was riding beside him in the same car. Two Roman Catholics, Griselio Torresola and Oscar Collazo, Puerto Rican Nationalist party members, tried to kill Harry Truman in a shooting fray at Blair House, in Washington, D. C., while Truman was president (1950), and did kill one of his guards. Torresola was killed and Collazo is now serving a life term in Leavenworth penitentiary. And in 1954 Roman Catholic members of the Puerto Rican Nationalist party, in a wild shooting fray in the House of Representatives, attempted to kill members of that body and wounded five congressmen.

The Roman Catholic Church, of course, had no connection with the Mafia or its activities, nor with the actions of the others mentioned here. But as the same stem that almost exclusively provided the religious background out of which those men came, it bears a heavy responsibility and must be judged accordingly.

7 Questionable Hospital Practices

A Roman Catholic hospital practice which very definitely has a moral aspect to it is that of baptizing Protestants and others who are thought to be in danger of death. An article by Fr. John R. Connery, S. J., in *Hospital Progress* (April, 1959), which magazine carries on its front cover the words, "Official Journal of the Catholic Hospital Association," sets forth in considerable detail the procedure to be followed by the chaplain or nurse in such cases. According to this article it is proper, and in some cases even mandatory, to baptize into the Roman Church, and even without their knowledge or consent, unbaptized persons or patients concerning whom it is not known whether they have been baptized or not, if they are thought to be in danger

of death. The patient need not be actually dying, but perhaps unconscious or so critically ill that death is a possibility. This practice applies particularly to newborn babes and to unconscious or critically ill persons if their parents or relatives are not available for consultation. Information concerning the baptism need not be given to anyone other than the local priest who records it. In this article we read:

“Q. Are you obliged to tell the parents of an infant baptized in danger of death, if the parents are not Catholics? What if the parents resent it and refuse to raise the child a Catholic?”

“A. Ordinarily it is not permitted to baptize children of non-Catholic parents against their wishes. To do so would be to violate the rights of these parents. ... When there is danger of death, however, the Church makes an exception, although even in this emergency primary responsibility for the child’s spiritual welfare belongs to the parents. ... It is only when the parents, through neglect or for reasons of their own, fail to provide for the baptism of the child, or when the emergency does not allow even sufficient time to warn the parents, that Church permits the Catholic minister to baptize the child. In this case the Church’s concern over the future religious education of the child... yields to the child’s immediate spiritual need. Similarly *the wishes of parents must give way to these circumstances* to the child’s own right to the means of salvation. *It will be permissible to baptize the child even without the knowledge or permission of the parents.* ... If a child in these circumstances lives through the emergency, the question arises about the advisability of informing the parents of the baptism. ... We can say that it would not be necessary, or even advisable, to acquaint non-Catholic parents with the fact that their child had received an emergency baptism unless there is good reason to believe that they would not resent it” [italics ours].

In regard to unconscious adults who are baptized Fr. Connery writes:

“In most cases it will not be advisable to acquaint the person with the fact that he was baptized unless it becomes clear that he would have wanted baptism under the circumstances.”

He goes on to say that those baptized become members of the Roman Catholic Church and that if children they should be trained as Catholics, but that it will not be wise to insist upon it if the parents do not agree, because resentment might be aroused against the church. He defends such baptism by saying that in any event it will not hurt anything, and that in some cases it might prove helpful, as for instance if the person married before a Protestant minister later was converted to Catholicism and wanted to get an annulment in order to marry a Roman Catholic. In such an event the first marriage would be held invalid.

This forced and secret baptism of the helpless—“baptism by stealth,” as some have called it—is justified by the Romanists on the basis of their doctrine that there is no hope of salvation for one who has not been baptized.

There are nearly 1,000 Roman Catholic hospitals in the United States. Most of

the patients in these hospitals are not Catholics, yet their treatment is governed by the Roman Catholic code of ethics in which the doctors and nurses are minutely instructed. Those instructions are set forth in detail by the Jesuit scholar Father Henry Davis, in his *Moral and Pastoral Theology*, and by Father Patrick A. Finney, in his *Moral Problems in Hospital Practice* (1947 ed., imprimatur by the archbishop of St. Louis). Concerning one particular phase of that code Paul Blanchard, in his *American Freedom and Catholic Power*, says:

"One of the most important doctrines in the Catholic medical code is the doctrine of the equality of mother and fetus. This doctrine is of special interest to every potential mother who has a Catholic physician.

"When the average American woman approaches the ordeal of childbearing, she takes it for granted that her physician will do everything possible to save her life in the event of complications. I am sure that 99 percent of all American husbands would consider themselves murderers if, confronted with the choice between the life of a wife and the life of her unborn child, they chose the life of the fetus. This is particularly true in the early months of pregnancy when such risks most frequently develop. Most of our citizens assume without discussion that every possible effort should be made to save the life of both mother and child, but that if a choice is forced upon the physician the mother should be given first consideration.

"The Catholic hierarchy does not endorse this choice, nor can a good Catholic physician leave such a choice to the husband and father and be true to the dogmas of his church. 'The life of each is equally sacred,' said pope Pius XI in his encyclical, *Casti Connubii*, 'and no one has the power, not even the public authority, to destroy it.'" (pp. 139-140).

Father Finney, in the book just mentioned, states the doctrine in question and answer form:

"If it is morally certain that a pregnant mother and her unborn child will both die, if the pregnancy is allowed to take its course, but at the same time, the attending physician is morally certain that he can save the mother's life by removing the inviable fetus, is it lawful for him to do so?"

Answer. "No, it is not. Such removal of the fetus would be direct abortion."

Mr. Blanshard remarks:

"It should be noted that under this statement of the complete doctrine, both mother and child must be allowed to die rather than allow a lifesaving operation that is contrary to the code of the priests. There is no choice here between one life and another; it is a choice between two deaths and one. The priests choose the two deaths, presumably in order to save the souls of both mother and child from a sin that would send the mother's soul to hell and the child's to the twilight hereafter known as limbo. The fetus in Father Finney's question would die anyway. It is described as 'inviable,' which means incapable of life. It may be a six-weeks embryo about the size of a small marble, without a face. Nevertheless, the life of the mother must be

sacrificed for this embryo that, by definition, is dying or will die.

"This doctrine is not a matter of opinion that priests or doctors are free to reject. It has been repeated over and over by Catholic authorities and incorporated into positive church law. Pope Pius XII reiterated the doctrine before the International College of Surgeons in Rome in May, 1948, when he declared that in spite of 'the understandable anguish of husbandly love' it is 'illicit even in order to save the mother—to cause directly the death of the small being that is called, if not for the life here below, then at least for the future life, to a high and sublime destiny' (pp. 141).

Such practices we consider reprehensible. And yet about eighty percent of all federal funds being given to non-profit hospitals are going to Roman Catholic hospitals. The code of ethics under which those hospitals operate is not that of the laws of the United States of America, nor of the states in which they are located, nor the code of the American Medical Association, but that of the Roman Catholic Church. Surely Protestants and others should not enter Roman Catholic hospitals if they can avoid it.

We have been struck repeatedly throughout the study of this religion, the basic policies of which have been formulated almost 100 percent by celibate priests, with the various phases of it which inflict such callous, inhuman, even brutal treatment upon women. That has come out in the abuses practiced in the confessional, the enslavement of women as nuns, the exclusion of women from any policy-making function in the church, the almost complete lack of educational facilities for women in Roman Catholic countries and again here in regard to hospital practice. This trait Roman Catholicism has in common with Mormonism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Mohammedanism. Each of these, as the present writer once heard a guide in the Mormon tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah, explain concerning Mormonism, is a "man's religion." How utterly unchristian such practices are!

8 Conclusion

L. H. Lehmann, in his booklet, *The Secret of Catholic Power*, shows why the Roman Church often is able to exert an influence far beyond that of its actual numbers. He says:

"As a system of power, the Roman Catholic Church has no equal and is likely to retain its influence as long as mankind remains spiritually unregenerate. For its entire structure is geared to an earthly, human realism that is admirably suited to the weakness of human nature. It possesses elements of power that are strictly empirical and tangible, of the kind that weigh far more with the multitudes than logical arguments or spiritual insight. On the one hand, it gains all the advantages accorded to religion, and on the other, all the benefits, profits, and power that accrue to political and business organizations.

"These elements of power appeal not only to the Catholic Church's own membership, but even more so to the great mass of people outside its membership who have little or no interest in any particular religion. This fact in itself constitutes an element of power that is more effective than

all the others combined. It explains why a country such as the United States, whose population is fully 80 percent non-Catholic, is controlled to such a great extent by the Catholic Church which claims the direct obedience of less than 20 percent of its inhabitants.

"Neither in Protestant countries such as the United States, nor in so-called Catholic countries such as Italy, Spain, France, Portugal and South America, does the Catholic Church derive its power from the actual numbers of devout church-going Catholics in good standing. This is small compared to the number of its mere adherents who though baptized in the Catholic Church fail to live up to its requirements of actual membership or 'communion' as understood by Protestant bodies. It is much smaller still compared to the vast number of unchurched people who admire it at a distance and are influenced, willy-nilly, by its political power, by its control of the press, movies, and radio, by its pageantry and grandeur, and, above all, by its moral code. Italy, Spain, France, Portugal, and the Latin American countries are regarded as almost 100 percent Roman Catholic and their destinies are tied to the Catholic Church's social, cultural, and moral code. Yet, only about one fifth of the Italian population are devout, church-going Catholics; in France only about 17 percent are practicing Catholics; and were it not for Franco's forced application of the Catholic Church laws and decrees, the percentage in Spain would be even less. Cardinal Spellman confessed in his *Action This Day*, p. 22, written in 1944 during his visits to Italy, Spain and other countries, that at a dinner with high prelates at the Nunciature in Madrid, he remembered the 'striking and terrifying remark' of a friend who was an authority on Spain that: *'Twenty-four hours of disorder in Spain could mean the assassination of every bishop, priest and nun that could be found.'*"

But, granted that the situation outlined by Mr. Lehmann is true, and we believe that it is, what is the remedy? How are Protestants to meet the challenge of Roman Catholicism? The solution, of course, is for Protestants to take their religion seriously, to work for it, propagate it, and so to evangelize effectively their own communities and eventually the world, as they are capable of doing with the true Gospel in their possession. Christ's command to His church was: "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations " (Matt. 28:19-20). That Romanism has flourished so luxuriously, and that it is to a large extent unopposed in many places, is due primarily not to Romanist strength but to Protestant indifference, as Modernism and Liberalism have weakened the churches and some of them have lost their evangelical witness.

However, there are some encouraging signs. The Roman Church has lost its grip on many of the traditionally Roman Catholic countries of Europe, and in those where it still has control it is hanging on by means of the artificial respiration of United States dollars. Various degrees of anti-clericalism are manifesting themselves in France and Italy, and in Spain the Roman Church retains control only through the support of a fascist political dictatorship. In Latin America it has lost the support of the laboring classes and also of the educated classes, and probably can claim the support of not more than 15 percent of the people.

On the other hand, in the United States the Roman Church has increased its

power significantly. It is an ironic turn of events that as other countries are throwing off the yoke of Rome, this "Land of the Free" is crawling under that yoke almost without a murmur. This has been a most fortunate break for the Vatican, and has enabled it to maintain far more strength in other countries than otherwise would have been possible. Its financial support from the United States has been enormous. To what extent it has gained control in the United States is difficult to estimate. But it clearly has made extensive gains not only in the political realm but also through its indirect pressure group control of our press, radio, television, and movies. Many of our biggest cities are so firmly controlled by Roman Catholic political machines that it is practically impossible for a Protestant to be elected mayor, e.g., New York, Chicago, Boston, San Francisco, and others. In some places the Roman Church is now the de facto, if not the de jure, ruler of this country.

When Protestantism fails there is one other source of relief, howbeit, a long-range and a very unpleasant one, namely, that *Roman Catholicism carries within itself the seeds of its own destruction*. It is a false system, and therefore it cannot ultimately succeed any more than can Nazism, or Fascism, or Communism, or any of the pagan religions. But like those systems it can deceive millions, and it can cause untold misery and destruction while it does hold sway.

Where Romanism becomes the dominant religion for generations, poverty and illiteracy become the rule, and private and public morals become a scandal. Eventually there comes a reaction. In Latin America today, for instance, we see such a reaction taking place. Weakened by the moral and spiritual condition of its clergy, and by the ignorance, superstition, poverty, and lethargy of its people, the Roman Church becomes an easy prey to its enemies, foremost of which is Communism. The Roman hierarchy has just recently waked up to the fact that it must clean up the church in Latin America or lose the whole area.

Such reactions as we are talking about have occurred in England, France, Spain, Mexico, and other countries, in which the people eventually rose up and disestablished or even abolished this misnamed Holy Roman Catholic Church. What a tragedy that a professedly Christian church should so degenerate that public opinion would hold it in contempt! The great rebellion that occurred against the Roman Church at the time of the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century, when in disgust and hatred for the old system the people rose up and more or less en masse threw it out of whole countries, was such a reaction. It is to be noted that a popular uprising against Protestantism has never occurred in any of those countries; for Protestantism does not enslave, but liberates and enlightens the people.

A most timely and earnest warning comes from one of our church magazines. It reads:

"The Roman Catholic Church is continually basking and growing in the light of free nationwide coverage in every media of communication. Never in all history has one religious faith received as much free TV, radio and newspaper coverage as Romanism receives today—and all of it favorable! She is quite effectively shielded from criticism. When has any person ever seen the

hierarchy, the practices or the faith of Rome ridiculed or belittled as we constantly witness in the case of fundamental Bible believers? Think of the publicity favoring Rome, attached to the late President Kennedy's inauguration and death, the pope's visit to the United Nations with almost exclusive day-long TV coverage, and more recently the marriage of Luci Baines Johnson to Patrick Nugent. For days at a time we witnessed whole newspaper pages given over to the extolling of Romanism. Then a Roman Catholic televised wedding!—and all of those events slanted, edited and projected to extol the teachings of Rome. It is no secret that Rome has been working for years to buy and take over all of the media of communication and news. It is terrifying to one who understands the sinister designs of Rome, to see the large number of television and radio stations, newspapers and magazines being bought up and controlled by Rome" (Western Voice, August 19, 1966). We have warned earlier (p. 379) of the danger inherent in the vast wealth accumulated by the Roman Church and held in reserve for possible use in just such purposes as these.

(Continued in [Chapter XVIII Intolerance, Bigotry, Persecution.](#))

All chapters of Roman Catholicism By Lorraine Boettner

- [Roman Catholicism By Lorraine Boettner Chapter I Introduction](#)
- [Roman Catholicism By Lorraine Boettner Chapter II The Church](#)
- [Roman Catholicism By Lorraine Boettner Chapter III The Priesthood](#)
- [Roman Catholicism By Lorraine Boettner Chapter IV Tradition](#)
- [Roman Catholicism By Lorraine Boettner Chapter V Peter](#)
- [Roman Catholicism By Lorraine Boettner Section Two Chapter VI The Papacy](#)
- [Roman Catholicism By Lorraine Boettner Chapter VII Mary Part 1](#)
- [Roman Catholicism By Lorraine Boettner Chapter VII Mary Part 2](#)
- [Roman Catholicism By Lorraine Boettner Chapter VIII The Mass](#)
- [Roman Catholicism By Lorraine Boettner Chapter IX The Confessional](#)
- [Roman Catholicism By Lorraine Boettner Chapter X Purgatory](#)
- [Roman Catholicism By Lorraine Boettner Section Three Chapter XI The Infallibility of the Pope](#)
- [Roman Catholicism By Lorraine Boettner Chapter XII Penance, Indulgences: Salvation by Grace or by Works?](#)
- [Roman Catholicism By Lorraine Boettner Chapter XIII Ritualism](#)
- [Roman Catholicism By Lorraine Boettner Chapter XIV Celibacy](#)
- [Roman Catholicism By Lorraine Boettner Chapter XV Marriage](#)
- [Roman Catholicism By Lorraine Boettner Section Four Chapter XVI The Parochial School](#)
- [Roman Catholicism By Lorraine Boettner Chapter XVII By What Moral Standard?](#)
- [Roman Catholicism By Lorraine Boettner Chapter XVIII Intolerance, Bigotry, Persecution](#)
- [Roman Catholicism By Lorraine Boettner Chapter XIX A System Tested by its Fruits](#)