**Unity Under Rome?**

*by Roland Worth, Jr.*

The Catholic Church is quite proud of its "unity." In contrast, they point to the immense division among those who claim the Bible as their ultimate authority. This indicates, so their argument goes, that the Bible is an unreliable final standard and that by submitting to the bishop of Rome schism can be avoided. How does this claim stack up against actual history? Poorly! To be quite blunt, the Catholic Church will find its claim believed only in proportion to the ignorance of its audience. For proof of this, let us examine the record of division in the early post-apostolic centuries. (It should be kept in mind that we do not know the exact year in which Catholicism came into existence. Many of the following events occurred in that period of transition between Christianity and Catholicism.) As our authority we will present quotations from the well known and respected French Catholic historian, H. Daniel-Rops in his volume, Church of Apostles and Martyrs (E. P. Dutton & Company, New York: 1960; reprinted 1963).

**Heresies of the Second Century**

"Heresies and schisms can be found as far back as one can go in Christian history. Whether it was a question of erroneous interpretation of dogmas or of the fact of Revelation, of aberrant moral tendencies or of secessions provoked by powerful individuals led astray by personal pride, these frictions and divisions had been very numerous: several had left livid scars on the body of the Bride of Christ. Thus in the second century we have observed the fanatical Montanus leading his followers into practices where faith and violence mingled in an apocalyptic exaltation. In the East particularly we have witnessed a proliferation of theories which by eviscerating Christian dogmas and history of their content, while preserving their vocabulary, had run the risk of burying the sound and healthy realism of the Gospel under sterile masses of speculation. Examples of these can be seen in Gnosticism and its countless variants. Thus again we have seen Marcion deriving some of his elements from Gnosticism and others from the ancient strata of Persian dualism, evolving a doctrine that enjoyed great influence on account of his own strong personality and which was an ancient expression of a kind of dualist Protestantism. There was not one of these tendencies which had not left its mark on some part of the Christian world" (p. 453).

**Heresies of the Third Century**

"Of course there were doctrinal difficulties too, of the kind we have seen springing up since the earliest years of Christianity. Heresy must indeed be regarded as an aspect of human intelligence defaced by sin, for it spread so prolifically. The old heresies of the second century were still alive: Montanism, to which Tertullian now brought his own alarming support, and Gnosticism, which was in the midst of disintegration but which swarmed everywhere in sectarian communities. Other heresies, of a rather different character, now arose; for instead of leaving the Church and establishing their own sects, the third-century heretics clung to a self-styled loyalty, claiming that they were still orthodox, even while they modified official dogmas to suit themselves. We shall see various bishops and not a few theologians straying along some very strange paths in this way, and it was not always easy either to bring them back to the fold or to expel them. These heresies were very numerous, varying in their terms of expression, but all connected with the fundamental problem of the Three Divine Persons and their relations with one another, and often including errors on the very reality of Christ. It is hardly possible to list them all. Modalism maintained that God existed only in one Person and not Three„ a Person who was successively called Father, Son and Holy Spirit according to the 'modes' of His action. According to the time, place, individuals and circumstances concerned, this theory was to exist under the separate names of Monarchianism, Patripassianism, and Sabellianism. Adoptianism, which was developed by a humble Byzantine leather-worker, Theodotus, alleged that Jesus was but a man who had been adopted by God. Subordinationism, a heretical trend, whose seeds can already be discerned in Origen, which his imprudent disciples were to carry to extremes, and which was to find its way into the heart of Arianism, tended to place Christ below the Father, in a second-class position" (p. 354).

**Heresies of the Fourth Century**

"The period that began with Constantine and lasted for rather more than one hundred years-witnessed the unfolding of ten or so heresies at least, with the most varied bearings on points of dogma. Several of these dated from the third century but they were to undergo considerable development during the fourth. Their names evoke scarcely an echo in Christian memories today. Very few of us have even heard, for instance, of the 'Pneumatomachians,' who denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit, or of the 'Apollinarists,' who believed in a tripartite division of human nature and maintained that Christ was human in His body and animal senses, but God through the Spirit alone. However, on points of theology which we cannot exactly understand, conflicts arose into which men hurled themselves with an impetuosity and a heroism which enabled them to embrace death itself and which are evidence of an ardent faith. Three of these deviations were to be of capital importance in the history of Christianity: Donatism, Arianism and the insidious current of Manichaeism" (p. 454).

**Conclusion**

These facts play havoc with the Catholic argument from "unity." It is like a beautiful diamond that sparkles in our hand but which, when we look at it under a magnifying glass, turns out to be a fake.

**Obeying God in One's Youth**

*by Heath Rogers*

"Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, ‘I have no pleasure in them’" (Eccl. 12:2). It is sad to see young people choose the world over the Lord. The Bible offers some compelling reasons for one to obey God in their youth.

1. Habits are formed in our youth. (Proverbs 22:6) The older we get, the harder it is to break out of our routine. If we make serving God a way of life in our youth it will stick with us through life.

2. Avoiding the regret of a wasted life. Peter tells us, "For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles - when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries" (1 Peter 4:3). Regardless of what age we are when we obey the gospel, the life we have lived up to that point is enough time spent in sin. Even if we live to an old age we’ve still really only had a few years to make a difference in this world (Eph. 5:15-17). Many people have to live with the consequences of the sins they committed in their youth. We do reap what we sow - "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life" (Gal. 6:7-8).

3. We are not to test God’s patience. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). The acceptable time to be saved is when we hear the gospel. "For He says: ‘In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.’ Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2; see also Acts 22:16). The devil will make sure that we never have a convenient time to become a Christian (Acts 24:25; Luke 8:12).

4. We aren’t promised tomorrow. "Whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away… Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin" (James 4:14, 17). On any given day, the obituary page contains the names of people who didn’t even make it out of their teens! Are you willing to take that chance?