

YMCA but why
can't we join?
A.D.K 2396



YMCA

But why can't we join?



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2016

<https://archive.org/details/ymcabutwhykantwe00unse>

But
Why can't we join the



The Y Answers	3
What the Y is not	4
What the Y is	5
The Y's objective	6
Dangers for the Catholic	8
Every Leader a Religious Leader	11
Doctrinal Deviations	12
Theological Liberalism	14
Teaching on Marriage and Sex	15
A View of Sex	16
More Examples	19
A Compromising Position	20
Appendix A: Holy Office Letter on the YMCA	22
Appendix B: Statement by Archbishop Albert G. Meyer	24
Appendix C: The YWCA — a separate organization	24

NIHIL OBSTAT:

John L. Reedy, C.S.C.
Censor Deputatus

IMPRIMATUR:

Most Rev. Leo A. Pursley, D.D.
Bishop of Fort Wayne, Indiana

May 20, 1959

Author: Douglas J. Roche

AVE MARIA PRESS • NOTRE DAME, INDIANA

Copyright 1959, Ave Maria Press

All rights reserved. This pamphlet may not be reproduced by any means in whole or in part without prior permission.

Fifth Printing, August 1960

The Y Answers

What's wrong with a Catholic joining the YMCA?

This is a tough question for most Catholics to answer because they just don't know what the Y really is.

So, when a son asks his Dad if he can go swimming at the local Y pool, join a hobby group at the Hi-Y, or go off to a YMCA summer camp for a couple of weeks, the parent very often can't think of any solid reasons for saying No.

Yet the Holy See has given clear guidance. It has warned Catholics that the YMCA "attacks their Faith under the pretense of purifying it and of giving them a better knowledge of the true way of life 'above all churches and apart from any creed'."

Even when a Catholic is aware of this general prohibition, he sometimes bristles with indignation, declaring the Church to be "old-fashioned" or "narrow-minded."

"I just don't see anything wrong with my boy playing with those nice kids at the Y," is the parental complaint.

The Y itself tells Catholics why the Church takes this strong stand. The Y is an honest organization and its vast range of literature makes the aims of this international body very clear.

N. B. The aim of this booklet is to explain what the Y believes and teaches. If you *really* want a short-cut course on the Y, keep reading, for you'll find actual quotations taken from the Y literature on what the Y teaches about religion, faith and sex.

Understand, this booklet is not an attack on the YMCA. Actually, the Y's goal of world-wide fellowship should be commended. Unquestionably, the Y brings about a lot of good in many countries. But there is a big difference between respecting an organization and throwing our weight behind it by joining and showing we believe in it.

What the Y is not

As far as Catholics are concerned, much of the confusion stems from the fact that the very nature of the Y is cloudy.

The Y is not a community center.

The Y is not another form of the Rotary or Lions Club.

The Y is not a Masonic organization.

Let's take a quick look at some of the implications of these negatives.

The Y itself is concerned about becoming identified as a community center—even though to all outward appearance it looks like one.

An official study guide, "Christian Education in YMCA Youth Program," published after a 1950 conference of the National Commission on Christian Education in YMCA Youth Program, contains this revealing statement:

"Many parents have specific objectives in sending their youngsters to the YMCA. Some desire to have them learn how to get along with others; some want them taught to swim; others want them to learn some athletic or game skill. To them the YMCA is primarily a place with a wholesome atmosphere in which youth have a good time while learning a skill. Few parents think seriously of the YMCA as a religious movement that is fundamentally concerned with Christian education."

This same booklet goes on to show the confusion about the Y's very definite sectarian status:

"In many communities, the YMCA is a member of the Community Chest. . . . To most Chest officials and committees the religious program of an organization is secondary in importance to its social welfare services. An organization is likely to be evaluated in terms of the scope of its services, the number of different persons involved in its program. Emphasis is usually placed on the interfaith character of constituency. Consequently, in its reports to the Chest and the community at large, there is a tendency for a (Y) Association to play down the distinctive aspects of its Christian education program."

This quotation (particularly the last line), ought to answer the queries of Catholic businessmen who claim they are made to look like they aren't supporting the community by failing to contribute to a drive for a new Y building.

But there's a good deal more in this examination of the Y, so let's move on.

The basic difference between the Y and such fraternal organizations as Rotary or Lions is that the Y has a religious purpose, while Rotary and Lions are non-sectarian groups whose members unite to perform good acts for the community.

It should be clear that the Church does not oppose the Y because it is a secret or seditious society. Its members are not bound by oath to conceal the names of the leaders and constitution; and it does not engage in plots to overthrow legitimate authority.

The Y is different from all these things.

What the Y is

The Y, first of all, is Protestantism.

It is religion, without a church.

It is supra-denominationalism where fellowship, not beliefs, is the No. 1 yardstick.

And despite its deep, abiding and continually-stated interest in religion, it produces a very real kind of religious indifference.

The YMCA literature refers constantly to the "Protestant heritage" of this vast organization which has swept around the world since its founding by George Williams in London in 1844. Its books and pamphlets make clear that all the Y's activities are enclosed by the religious framework of the YMCA. In fact, as several authors emphasize, the sports, social and educational programs have no reason to exist if they do not fulfill the definitive purpose of the Y:

“. . . world-wide fellowship of men and boys united by a common loyalty to Jesus Christ for the purpose of de-

veloping Christian personality and building a Christian society.”

“Faith for the Future,” published in 1950 by the Y’s own publishing house in New York, *Association Press*, talks about the Protestantism of the Y in plain language:

“We must never forget that ours was a Protestant Christian inception and even though it is sometimes embarrassing where Roman Catholics are concerned, we still draw our main inspiration from our Protestant heritage and through non-conformist uses of religion. Our duty now is not to minimize but rather to maximize our heritage.”

We begin now to see some of the reasons for the Holy See’s warning to Catholics to stay out of the YMCA.

If it is clear that a Catholic cannot sing in the choir at a Baptist church service (however beautifully the choir sings), or that a Catholic cannot send his child to Sunday School at a Methodist church (however excellently the school is conducted), it is just as clear that a Catholic cannot join the YMCA because the Y considers itself above all churches. It spawns a spirit of religious indifference — it’s the fellowship that counts.

The next time your son asks to go to the Y, remember this: the Y has a religious purpose. It is not a Catholic purpose. In fact, the Y’s literature (in which authors frequently contradict one another) contains heresy and condones actions Catholics must regard as immoral. Far from the Y’s teaching being a “side-line” of their social, cultural and athletic activities, it is the other way around. These things exist to attract young people into the Y, who are then encouraged into discussion groups, study clubs and youth counselling.

The Y’s Objective

The final objective of the YMCA, says Y historian Sherwood Eddy in “A Century With Youth” (*Association Press*, 1944), is to seek first the Kingdom of God, **“and then to extend the rule of God in the lives of young men and boys in the community, the country, and the world at large. We**

conceive the spiritual work of the Association to be part of the Kingdom of God."

Then Eddy makes the point that "We must keep our central objective always clearly before us; yet we must embrace the whole of life in our wide interests, which must include the spiritual, cultural, physical, economic, political, and social aspects of living."

The reputation of the Y for welcoming a newcomer of any or no religion tends to overshadow the importance of the word "Christian" in the very name of the organization. We can understand better the "heritage" of which the Y speaks by remembering that the heritage is rooted in three movements: the industrial revolution, the evangelical revival and Puritanism. YMCA founder Williams and his band of laymen were inspired by the teaching of John Wesley and they united for Christian service regardless of creed.

The YMCA was brought to North America shortly after its founding. Before long, the triangular emblem, representing the unity of body, mind and spirit, and recognized by the Y as a religious symbol, was familiar throughout the land.

Eddy relates how, in the intervening years, the Association modernized its program by widening the variety of activities on the one hand, and putting new stress on the central purpose on the other. Physical fitness programs became popular, dormitories were built, Bible study and prayer groups started — all to nurture the spirit, body and mind.

"The Association struggled manfully to reconcile the new 'secular' with the older 'religious' activities. Attempts were made to inject religion into physical work and educational work; but this seemed forced and artificial, and reaction was inevitable. Association workers now began to think in terms of the newer educational conceptions, which recognized possible religious values in every activity of life. 'Religion is life' became the slogan, and an effort was made to integrate religion with the whole program."

Eddy goes on to explain how the Y recognized all activities as having potentially religious values. "Thus, playing a game, planning a campaign, or serving on a committee can

be as much a spiritual experience as studying the Bible and joining with one's fellow men to worship God."

Now we can see why the Y utilizes sports, dramatics, music, discussion, travel, motion pictures, study groups, formal and informal education, camping, religious meetings, literature and social affairs. "Emphasis in the small group, class or team," says the Y, is upon richness of content in the program, and upon the quality of relationships between the participants and between them and their leaders."

So much interest by Catholics in the YMCA centers around their swimming pools that it might be well to see how the Y itself regards this activity. In "Toward Our Second Century," a 1953 publication of the World's Committee of the YMCA, Emil Brunner says:

"Our social work does not have its value in itself, but as demonstration of the love of Christ. We are not a YMCA because of model swimming pools available to everybody, but because we build and use a swimming pool to bring the love of Christ to young men. The YMCA has little importance as an institution of welfare. The YMCA either is a form of Ecclesia [i.e., church] or it is nothing. If it is not Ecclesia, it is a useless, amateurish duplication of public welfare institutions."

The YMCA is inwardly religious and outwardly a welfare institution, says Brunner, and he goes on:

"The most important task of the Ecclesia in the New Testament is to make Christ known to all men. Therefore, the most important task of the YMCA is to win the youth of our time for Christ. Youth for Christ, Christ for Youth. Whether this is done by swimming pools, evening classes, sport training or Bible and prayer meetings is not the main question."

Dangers for the Catholic

Catholics could hardly ask the YMCA to be franker in its aims. Yet many Catholics ignore the Y's credo on the bland assumption that they or their children can take the recrea-

tion they want from the Y without any of the Y's philosophy.

It isn't likely that a Catholic will meet hostility in the Y because of his religion (whether or not a Catholic can accede to an executive position in the Y is another matter, however). Nor is hostility toward his own Church likely to be engendered in the Catholic.

The real danger lies in this: the Catholic who joins the Y invariably runs into a real, yet subtle, religious indifference which can end in the loss of his Faith. The Catholic can scarcely escape the constant impact on his mind of the prevailing conviction of the other members that no church really matters.

Catholic youth leaders in the U. S. have found this to be the case. They have seen that the "faith" professed by the Y is little more than a sentimental attachment to Christ — expressed by Bible reading and prayer along with the desire to live by Christian standards of behavior *which go undefined*.

This vagueness is expressed in a booklet, "For This We Work," which states that the YMCA, building a Christian society, holds certain values. But:

"Not as fixed points or absolutes to which people give assent, or which are imposed on them. Rather they are goals which provide direction to guide the development of young people."

In short, the denial of "absolutes" is precisely where the YMCA veers away from the teaching of Christ.

The Catholic parent can probably assume (rightly) that his youngster will react to a proselytizing approach. But can the youngster as quickly spot the "soft sell" which is what the Y specializes in?

Although the Catholic becomes interested in the Y for the recreational facilities available, all too often this preliminary contact with other young people leads to attendance at discussions and talks on scientific, philosophical, theological or moral topics — in which he comes under the influence of Protestant evangelism.

The Protestant approach to divorce, birth control, sex relations, euthanasia, abortion, cremation, gambling, films, and popular but morally doubtful books begins to be implanted on his mind. The Catholic juvenile is frequently unable to see through the objectionable Protestant approach on these subjects, and doubts about the "rigid" Catholic position occur.

Whether or not he begins to slip as a Catholic at this point depends also on the factors of his religious background and education, family life and parental watchfulness. If the boy who joins the Y becomes a fallen-away Catholic, the blame may not be due entirely to the Y teachings. But it is certain that no Catholic can belong to the Y without placing his Faith in jeopardy. As the imprint of the Y's philosophy becomes deeper on his mind, Catholicism inevitably gets shoved aside.

Summary

Catholics who would not dream of sending their children to a service in a Protestant church willingly permit them to go to the YMCA. Many Catholics think the YMCA and its family, including the popular Hi-Y, is merely a community center whose sole aim is to provide a decent place for recreation, study or hobbies. They do not know that the Y has a specific religious purpose which is steeped in Protestantism. They do not understand how their children can come under the spell of the Y's philosophy which undermines all churches because it considers itself above all churches. They do not know that the Holy See has warned Catholics not to join the YMCA because of grave dangers to the Faith through the religious indifferentism of the Y. They do not know these facts — or they do not care. But the facts are there.

Every Leader a Religious Leader

Every leader in the YMCA is expected to be a religious leader. As we have seen, the Y itself insists that in its program every activity is considered to lead to Christian education. But teach what?

Since the Y is not committed to any specific creed, its literature is full of personal interpretations on the meaning of Christ in mankind.

The fact that Christ was God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, assumed the nature of man while retaining the Nature of God, allowed Himself to be crucified to re-open the gates of Heaven to fallen man, rose from the grave and founded a one Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church — this basic, collective fact of Christianity is not stated by the Y.

Nowhere in the Y literature is Catholic teaching to be found. Yet all manner of Protestants have their say about Christianity, and their works are published by *Association Press*.

Heresy abounds — from small errors to giant-sized.

About the closest one can come to finding out what the Y stands for in the field of dogma is this passage in "A Century With Youth," the history of the Y by Sherwood Eddy.

"This movement seized upon the name, which it believed to be above every name, of a young man in Nazareth who was to make the greatest impact upon history of any man who had ever lived, and who furnished the highest and most complete moral and spiritual ideal for the individual and for society.

"However broad and tolerant, however all-embracing the Association later became, those who remained true to the first principles of the movement held that the 'C' in YMCA must remain dominant and that, in all its aim of character building, the quality and significance of the Association must be more than philanthropic or secular. It must ever be inspired by the central dynamic of Christian faith.

"Refusing permanently to be committed to any specific creedal interpretation of religion, the movement was free to

explore the possibilities of experimentation in many lands, in personal and social living. Centered in Christ, the Association could become world-wide in its scope,"

Doctrinal Deviations

Eddy's vagueness in the passage above about the reality of Christ Our Lord is carried through the Y literature.

A book by Jack Finegan, "Questions and Answers on Religion," copyrighted by the National Board of Young Men's Christian Associations and published in 1958 by *Association Press* provides a good sampling of the Y's approach. Dr. Finegan is introduced as a Christian archeologist and biblical interpreter, and "one of the most zestful writers on the practical problems of everyday living."

Finegan expresses fuzzy notions about God, but with no reference to the Trinity; describes Jesus but with no reference to the Virgin birth; and puts forth this answer to the question, What is the kingdom which Jesus proclaimed?: "God here and now calls men into a new relationship to himself and others, into a covenanted community which serves as a leaven in the loaf of society, into a kingdom which is and is not fully yet."

To the question, What is the best translation of the Bible? Finegan aligns himself with those who cite the King James version. There is no mention of the Catholic translations.

He comes to the question, What is the Roman Catholic Church? and replies: "The Roman Catholic Church is the form which Christianity assumed as time went along, particularly insofar as it was centered around Rome . . ." This misleading answer side-steps the overriding fact that Christ established one Church, not something vaguely called Christianity out of which the Catholic Church emerged.

Again, a strictly Protestant answer is given to the question, Why are there so many different churches? Finegan replies that the essential principle of Protestantism is that each man should read the Bible for himself and go directly

to God through faith in Christ. "If each man may read, study and interpret the Bible for himself, there is nothing to keep him, as he does so, from thinking his own thoughts and arriving at his own conclusions. This is exactly what Protestants have done. Set free from the restraining influence of a centralized authority, and inspired by the joy of free perusal of God's word, each group has gone in its own direction."

A scanning of other YMCA publications shows how widespread heresy is in the organization.

Items:

→A lecture given by Dr. Edwin Prince Booth at the Ninth North American Assembly on YMCA work with boys, at Green Lake, Wis., contained this teaching, quoted in "Tools for the Task" *Association Press*, 1950:

"There never was a first Church; one church centered in Rome, the other centered in Constantinople. Up through the Roman Church came the mighty Middle Ages. From the Roman Church our Christian world was split. Up through Rome came Martin Luther, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The Church at Constantinople was never felt until 1453 . . ."

→In a YMCA pamphlet, "The Life of Christ," based on a broadcast in Port Huron, Mich., Charles Melick answers this question, Did Jesus know (at the age of 12) whether or not he was to be the Messiah? "We cannot tell, but I don't think so. He expected to be a devout follower of God, but it is improbable that He knew at the age of 12 just what His life work would be." This of course, amounts to a denial of His Divinity.

→"The Protestant Heritage," by Samuel McCrea Cavert, *Association Press*, 1947, alleges that Protestants and Catholics "share a common Christian faith" which acknowledges Christ as Lord and Savior. Both Protestantism and Catholicism, he says, "go back in their history to Jesus Christ and his disciples, to St. Paul, and to all the great leaders of the fifteen Christian centuries before the Reformation. Protestantism, in its essential nature, began with Jesus — not

with Martin Luther. Saint Paul preached in the first century what Luther reaffirmed in the sixteenth."

The gratuitous assumption that Protestantism started with Jesus is so erroneous as to hardly need contradiction here. What is noteworthy, however, is that this argument, like so much of the religious beliefs found in Y literature, is cloaked in suave ambiguities which confuse the undiscerning reader.

In the passage quoted above, Cavert goes on with the statement that **"all true Christians are ministers of God."** He adds:

"Luther used the term 'the universal priesthood of believers' to express this great insight. In some religions a priest is assumed to stand between man and God, representing God's will and authority. The Protestant, because of his assurance of a direct relation with God, because of his own knowledge of the saving love of Christ as recorded in the Bible, stands before God in his own dignity as a person."

Theological Liberalism

Many more similar quotations could be included. But the net result would be the same. Theological Liberalism has pervaded the Y. There is no discipline in its teaching.

The YMCA holds that it is concerned primarily with "practical Christian living at home, school, work, and in the community." It considers the 400 million young men in the world its parish. It professes loyal co-operation with church, home and school. The well-intentioned Y leaders speak of building a "new man" and a "new society" by a program of the "whole gospel" for the whole man, nation and world.

The Catholic has no choice but to consider all this as religious flag-waving. The YMCA has set its own rules for building the good life — not the rules of Christ. Despite its insistence on the word "Christian" in its name, the YMCA refuses to come to grips with the reality of Christianity.

It is little wonder, then, to see the Y facing up to this dilemma. The booklet, "Christian Education in YMCA Youth Program" describes the Y as **"religious motivated, but religiously inarticulate."**

The rank and file of its lay leaders are conservative in their religious thinking, the booklet notes. And its professional leadership is somewhat "emancipated" religiously, but its faith is so inarticulate that it can hardly be classified as liberal or conservative. **"The implications of religious liberalism are imbedded in much of its practice, however."**

This inarticulateness is one of the major problems in the Y, the booklet states. It is evident whenever Y leaders get together to discuss what they mean by Christian education in the YMCA program.

"They find relatively small areas of common agreement in the interpretation of the Bible, Christian doctrine, Christian ethics, and methods of education."

Summary

The YMCA insists that Christian education is a vital part of its program. But because each member is free to interpret God and Christianity for himself, there is little agreement on what to teach—other than the vague and "practical" applications of universal brotherhood. The Y literature is filled with heresy, contradictions and ambiguities. This literature makes it clear that the one great and ever present danger to the faith of the Catholic youth and adults in the Y environment is the stealthy and undiscernible enemy of religious indifference. In the Y program, this religious indifference masquerades as "Christianity, pure and undefiled."

Teaching on Marriage and Sex

The section just read opened with the statement that every leader in the YMCA is expected to be a religious leader. Now it can be added that every leader is expected to be a counsellor. The development of youth to the ideals of the Y is the aim of the counselling which is carried on constantly.

Dealing with youth, it's inevitable that one of the principle areas should be marriage and sex. The Y encourages such study groups and discussions by devoting a large part of its literature to books and pamphlets in this subject.

The errors compounded in the field of morality are not perhaps of greater importance than the dogmatic errors, but they take on special significance because of their immediate effect on youths who have a normal, avid interest in finding out everything there is to know about sex.

Here is where the Catholic parent should be doubly watchful, for some of the material in the Y publications can quickly undermine solid Catholic teaching in morality.

Reading this literature, one cannot help noting that it is frequently arguing the right manner of conduct, but for the wrong reasons. This again is due to the fact that there are no "absolutes" for the Y.

Generally speaking, pragmatism prevails in the teaching on sex. Some of the publications push morality so far into the background that it is out of sight.

By and large, the books and pamphlets are devoid of moral tone, moral sanction or mention of the 10 Commandments. There is no condemnation on moral grounds of such practices as masturbation, birth control, use of contraceptives, sterilization or prostitution.

The tone of this literature is not really Christian at all. And the teaching has an overriding danger for youth because of its apparently Christian source. Not only is this literature available at the Y centers, it is published by the Y's own *Association Press*.

A View of Sex

A good example of the Y's approach to sex is found in Seward Hiltner's "Sex and the Christian Life," copyrighted by the National Board of Young Men's Christian Associations (*Association Press* 1957). Dr. Hiltner, professor of Pastoral Theology of the University of Chicago's Federated Theological Faculty, offers what is described as "a constructive, realistic

interpretation of sex" drawn from his full-length work, "Sex Ethics and the Kinsey Reports."

Hiltner states that it is **"false to the biblical message"** to hold that sex activity is justified only by a reproductive end. This attitude opens the door to birth prevention — and he never closes it.

Discussing the differing views about sex held by society, he mentions what he calls the **"no harm"** attitude in which **"the sex partners must enter the engagement voluntarily and without coercion. Pregnancy and disease are eliminated by contraceptives, and nothing is done that is publicly offensive. Sex is a private affair so long as it is in good taste and not obviously harmful. This attitude is not without merit in its intention . . ."**

Hiltner says he is unsatisfied with this view, preferring the personal-interpersonal attitude in which man is **"neither legalistic nor libertarian. . . . He is not preoccupied with right and wrong as extraneous and imposed factors. He believes there is a rightness and wrongness in every situation that deserves consideration on its own merits."**

Again we find the free interpretation approach paramount, a flexibility it is difficult to reconcile with the Commandments.

A misrepresentation of the Catholic Church is found in this work, too. Hiltner says the Roman Catholic view of sex **"tends to say less about sex than about the family as a social institution."** The suggestion here is that the Church tolerates sex for reproduction and the relief of concupiscence, which is patently false.

Protestant interpreters, Hiltner adds, **"feel that in spite of the detailed attention that many Roman Catholic moral theologians have given to sex matters, there is not a fundamental and clear-cut view of sex within that Church."** What effect will this statement have on a Catholic teen-ager in the Y?

The refusal to come to grips with God's law and the matter of sin becomes obvious as Hiltner turns to some practical questions. He poses the question, Must the Christian

view always be against extramarital sexual relations? He replies in the affirmative, **“unless the circumstances are unusual.”**

Infidelity caused by a lonely husband overseas or the denial of relationship by a cold wife is mentioned. **“Though the Christian view can hardly give approval to such relationships, it must be cautious in judging such instances. Their meaning may be different in different circumstances.”** Then he states the crux of his view: **“The deepest case against extramarital relations lies in the injury that may be done to persons (whether the partners themselves or their children) rather than in the disorder that may result in marriage as a social institution.”** Not only does such a view lead to chaos, but it refuses to accept the primary fact that God has forbidden such relationships.

Hiltner employs the same reasoning with regard to pre-marital relations. He says they are **“unwise”** because they may inflate the importance of sex within marriage beyond its true proportions, and invite early disillusionment.

His disastrous conclusion follows: **“Yet we recall the Biblical concept of ‘one-flesh union.’ That union is sacramental, whether they realize it or not. In such a sense, the union marries them. The question then becomes a social and psychological: if married in fact, why not bring the fact before the community?”**

The lengths that such specious reasoning lead to is demonstrated next by Hiltner as he discusses whether an unmarried man or woman who has no expectation of marriage should have any sex life. His reply:

“ . . . Against a legalism that would simply condemn all sexual relationships of such people, regardless of context or motive, the Christian view would raise a warning. The general question would be: Under some conditions, may sex limited be better than no sex, provided the radical and serious character of sex is not denied? We need some ethical wrestling with this question.”

And on that perilous limb, the reader is left stranded.

More Examples

Hiltner, of course, is only one author whose wishy-washy views on sex and marriage are readily available at the YMCA. A Catholic marriage manual is never in evidence to counteract this false teaching. In fact, most references to the Catholic Church in this regard describe the Church in the unflattering term, "legalistic."

A few more examples of the Y's approach to sex should suffice to make the point of this booklet.

Items:

→"THE QUESTION OF PETTING," by Max J. Erner: **"The essential harm of petting lies in the fact that it is a cultivation of a low order of love."**

→"GETTING READY TO FALL IN LOVE," by Roy E. Dickerson: **"The gravest danger in . . . loveless sexual relations is not the risk of contracting syphilis or gonorrhea or of having an illegitimate child, but of stunting or dwarfing one's emotional growth so that he is incapable, whatever his years, of mate-love."**

→"FACTS OF LIFE AND LOVE," by Evelyn M. Duvall deals with many subjects. Prostitution: **". . . Not only is it bad in itself, in that it capitalizes on the impulses of man and enslaves woman, but it also is a basic factor in civic corruption and the breeding place for venereal disease."** Masturbation: **". . . With a habit as common as this seems to be, what the harm is, if any, is a very real question."** Sterilization: **"It is a very serious step, to be entered into only with real responsibility and forethought."**

→There are many illustrations of the Y's attitude toward birth prevention. One will do. Oliver M. Butterfield, in "SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR HAPPY MARRIED LIVING," says every young couple needs a while to become acquainted and adjusted before assuming the strain of a child. **"Some profess religious scruples against what they call 'interfering with nature' by attempting to prevent the conception of children in connection with sexual intercourse. Such**

attitudes are scarcely better than the old superstition that 'God sends the babies.' ”

Summary

The personal interpretation that prevails in the YMCA leads to errors in the teaching of sex and marriage that have especially harmful consequences for young people. In most areas, authors recommend proper moral conduct — but not because God has so ordained this, but because it is the most practical thing to do in these authors' vague interpretation of Christianity. In other cases, they condone acts which are absolutely immoral. The law of God is translated into "proper conduct for man." The teaching is popularized and the errors covered with a facile argument.

A Compromising Position

With the evidence of the character of the YMCA assembled, it should be clear why Catholics cannot join it. For a Catholic to refuse to join or support the Y is not being stand-offish in the community, or unnecessarily rigid, but prudent in the possession of one's Faith. In these times, when an ecumenical spirit is in the world, a special wariness is called for because the Y considers itself a leader in the uniting of Christendom *through the initiative of forward-minded laymen.*

In fact, Sherwood Eddy, the Y writer, finds the genius of the YMCA in the fact that its members belong to many denominations and see themselves "**transcending doctrinal and ecclesiastical differences because of their unity.**"

The Y's experience, he notes, makes it an admirable instrument to prepare the way for Christian unity — but Eddy would place in the hands of laymen judgments which belong to the hierarchy. While it may take generations to unite the hierarchy of the Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox churches, "**those laymen having the least prejudice and the most contact and understanding with people are best able to achieve**

the spirit and practice of Christian unity in the living present." These laymen must be in the vanguard, he says. "For ourselves, we believe that, being members of the Christian Church, we are already members of one universal brotherhood."

On the other hand, we find at the top level of the Y little naivete about the relationship of the Catholic Church and the Y. "Present-Day YMCA—Church Relations in the United States" (*Association Press*, 1948) contains this significant passage:

"It is commonly believed . . . among Association leaders that the opportunity for reaching any formal understanding with the leaders of the Roman Catholic faith is small indeed. . . . There is little evidence anywhere in the United States that those who set the policies and dogmas of that Church, will ever in the foreseeable future look comfortably or generously upon YMCA contacts for their young people, or upon responsible leadership by their laymen in YMCA affairs."

A Catholic who joins the Y today actually puts himself in a compromising position. For the YMCA throws its strength behind the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U. S., the World Council of Churches, and the World Christian Youth Commission. Catholics in the Y are thus officially represented in these bodies which the Catholic Church refuses to join.

Moreover, Catholics who take part in activities add to the Y roster which strengthens its position in asking for community funds. In many parts of the country it has gotten so that business is led to believe that an appeal for funds for Catholic youth is *sectarian*, but an appeal for the YMCA is *interdenominational* and serves all youth, including Catholic youth.

Catholic parents, should beware of thinking that their local Y is "different," and is not concerned with the evangelizing which characterizes the international body.

The local Y, as long as it retains the national and world name of Young Men's Christian Association, cannot disasso-

ciate itself from the national and world purposes and activities and its world fellowship in Christ — regardless of how diffidently the local Y may pursue this goal. Some checking into the local Y might prove profitable. For instance, the annual report of a Y center in a suburban community of Cleveland, Ohio, told how from the beginning “we have striven to emphasize in a very practical way the spiritual side of [the Y] triangle, whether it is with a group of boys in a club meeting, or on the gym floor, or some form of devotions in a session with the Board of Managers.”

The local Y then notes:

“The Junior and Senior Hi-Y have outstandingly beautiful religious induction services for new members; campers remember the high moments of devotion in the chapel in the woods where nature and the ‘out of doors’ play an important role. Through our World Service programs, we constantly strive toward a World Brotherhood beginning in each club meeting where all faiths stand side by side.”

N.B. A Catholic asks, “But *why* can’t we join the Y?”
The Y has given the answer.

Appendix A:

Holy Office Statement

The Vatican
November 5, 1920

The Holy Office calls the attention of Ordinaries of places to the fact that certain associations of non-Catholics are doing great harm especially to Catholic youth by drawing them away from the Faith under the pretext of affording them opportunities for physical culture and education.

The inexperienced can easily be deceived by the fact that these associations have the financial and moral support of very respectable citizens, and do

very effective work in the various fields of beneficence. Their real nature, however, is no longer doubtful, as it has been openly declared in the magazines which are their organs. Their aim is, they say, to cultivate the characters and improve the morals of youth. This culture, which is their religion, they define as "perfect freedom of thought, disassociated from the control of any religious creed."

It is especially young students of both sexes who are endangered. These are first shaken in their traditional faith, then led to hesitate between various opinions, next brought to universal doubt, and finally induced to acquiesce in a vague sort of general religion which is certainly far other than that taught by Our Lord Jesus Christ. The greatest injury occurs in the case of those whose home training in religion has been wanting through negligence or ignorance.

Among these associations it will suffice to name one which is, as it were, the parent of many others, one which is very far-reaching . . . and backed by immense resources; namely, the Young Men's Christian Association, or the YMCA; an association which, on the one hand, enjoys the support of many non-Catholics in good faith, who believe that it is helpful to all and certainly harmful to none, and on the other hand, is favored by certain easy-going Catholics who are ignorant of its true nature. It boasts indeed a sincere love for youth, as though it had nothing more at heart than their bodily and mental welfare; but at the same time it attacks their faith under the pretense of purifying it and of giving them a better knowledge of the true way of life "above all churches and apart from any religious creed . . ."

Appendix B:

Statement by Most Rev. Albert G. Meyer Archbishop of Chicago

Membership in such organizations, even though it be taken out merely for the sake of recreation or for the use of athletic facilities, carries with it a compromise of one's own faith in the one true Church of Christ by becoming a member of a non-Catholic religious organization, contains the seeds of indifference by promoting the idea that any Church is satisfactory provided only one accepts Christ as his Savior; or, at least, frequently is a distinct danger to the faith of the Catholic.

Appendix C:

The YWCA a separate organization

The Young Men's Christian Association and the Young Women's Christian Association are separate organizations. However, there is a markedly similarity between the two.

The purpose of the United States YWCA, as contained in the December, 1955, issue of the monthly YWCA Magazine is:

"To build a fellowship of women and girls devoted to the task of realizing in our common life those ideals of personal and social living to which we are committed by our faith as Christians.

"In this endeavor we seek to understand Jesus, to share His love for all people, and to grow in the knowledge and love of God."

Protestant in nature, the association is primarily religious as in the case of the YMCA.

The inspiration for this informative booklet was contained in an article that appeared in the June 21, 1958 issue of



Articles like this are of interest to Catholics everywhere. In each and every issue, you will find stimulating reading that will keep you informed.

A trial subscription is offered for a period of **33 issues** at the **SPECIAL** price of **\$3.00**.

To take advantage of this offer simply print your name and address on this coupon and mail to:

SUBSCRIPTION DESK -----

AVE MARIA • Notre Dame, Indiana

name.....

address.....

city..... zone..... state.....

Bill me \$..... Enclosed

SPECIAL OFFER 33 issues \$3 (YMCA-1)

755990